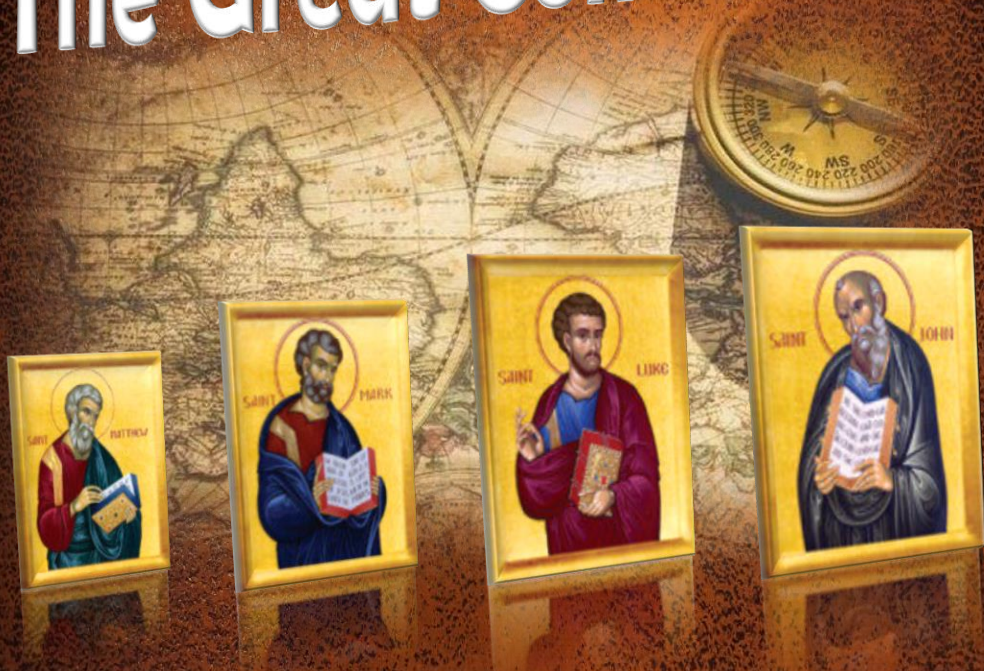


The Four Gospel & The Great Commission



THOMAS HWANG

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the gospel to all creation.
(Mark 16:15)"*



The Four Gospels
&
The Great Commission

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The Four Gospels and the Great Commission

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Preface

The Four Gospels are frequently read and quoted books of the Bible. Christians read the Gospels to learn about what the Lord Jesus did when He was on earth, the words that He preached, and the signs and wonders He performed, so that they may imitate Jesus in their lives. Over the 2,000 years since the Four Gospels were written, the words and acts of Lord Jesus have permeated deeply into the hearts of Christians, changing their lives and helping them grow spiritually as well as mentally. Because these works were done by Jesus Himself, they have been all the more powerful.

The 'Four Gospels' refers to the four books of the Gospel, namely, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. 'Gospel' means "good news" in English; it was originally "*Evangelion*" (εὐαγγέλιον) in Greek, with the same meaning. This Greek word borrowed in English, *Evangel*, has a similar pronunciation and the same meaning, "Gospel" or "good news". We Christians are already accustomed to all of these terms.

Then, what exactly is the "Gospel", or Good News? We can find out from the words of Apostle Paul in Romans. In Romans 1:2-5, it is written, "the gospel He (God) promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding His Son, who as to His earthly life was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by His

resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. Through Him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for His name's sake." So let's look at what these verses tell us about the Gospel.

First of all, the Gospel is something God promised beforehand in the Old Testament (Rom 1:2-3). The Old Testament, from its beginning chapters, prophesied that Jesus Christ was going to come into this world. God said that Jesus would come as "the Seed of the Woman" (Gen 3:15), "a Descendant of Abraham" (Gen 12:2-3), and "the Anointed One who will preach good news to the poor" (Isa 61:1). And not only these specific passages, but in fact all of the rituals and laws of the Old Testament figuratively show us, each as a type or pattern (Rom 5:14), that Lord Jesus will come to this world as the Savior. The Bible teaches us that the Old Testament is a "copy and shadow" of the New Testament (Heb 8:5, 9:9, 23, 24). Also, Jesus Himself said that whole of the Old Testament is about Himself (Lk 24:27, 44; Jn 5:39). The relationship between Jesus and the laws of the Old Testament is discussed in detail in my books on Christian Soteriology and the Feasts of Israel.

The Gospel as prophesied in the Old Testament can be summarized as follows: Jesus Christ, who is Himself God, will become flesh and come to this world. Through His suffering and death on the cross, He will destroy the powers of darkness and death, and He will rise again three days after His death. Whoever believes this will be saved and receive eternal life; this is not by human efforts but completely by the grace of God (Eph 2:7-9). This whole message, this "good news", is the Gospel. Jesus came to this world to perform this work (Jn 1:14, 3:16). Jesus Himself said in

Luke 4:43, "I must preach the kingdom of God... for I was sent for this purpose."

So this Good News that has been prepared must be spread to someone. Who, then, are the intended recipients of the Gospel? According to Romans 1:5, they are the Gentiles. Paul, the author of Romans, makes it clear that it is the mission of the apostles to spread the Gospel to the Gentiles. There are in fact countless passages in the Scriptures which tell us that salvation will come to the Gentiles. For instance, it was already made known to Abraham in Genesis (Gen 12:2-3; Gal 3:8). In the New Testament, Jesus said that He would preach the Good News to the poor, the prisoners, the blind, and oppressed. These types of people all symbolize the Gentiles (Lk 4:17-19). Moreover, when Jesus gave His disciples the Great Commission, He specifically told them to go and save the Gentiles. "He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mk 16:15). The topic of the "recipients of the Gospel" is one of the most important topics of this book and will be examined in detail as the book progresses.

So based on this definition of the Gospel, this book intends to discuss the Four Gospels in the context of the entire Bible. In Chapter 1, we will examine the structure of the Bible in a systematic manner, classifying the books of the Bible into various categories. We will examine how the Old and New Testaments are each comprised, who the authors of the books are, and why God had allowed the Bible written. Moreover, we will find out how the 66 books of the Bible were collected and compiled into one book, how the chapters and verses were divided as we see them today,

and by whom and when the Bible was translated into many different languages of the world.

In Chapter 2, 'Outline of the Four Gospels', we will discuss the background in which the Four Gospels were written, and examine the similarities and differences between the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, Mark, and John. We will primarily analyze and compare the parables and miracles that appear in each of the Four Gospels; tables are provided enumerating the occurrences of parables and miracles in each Gospel. This will help the readers to see the big picture before they study the Four Gospels in earnest manner.

Chapters 3 through 6 will provide an intensive study of the Four Gospels. We will examine in detail the background of each Gospel, information about the author, the purpose in writing, the book's characteristics, structure, and so forth. In particular, the entire content of each Gospel will be laid out in tables, so that readers can see the flow of all the events in one glance. First, each book will be divided into 7 to 10 large sections based on Jesus' deeds. Then each section will be further subdivided according to Jesus' specific deeds and teachings. If one reads the Four Gospels using this approach, he or she will be much better able to find out the hidden, precious messages in each Gospel.

Chapter 7, the last chapter of this book, will examine the Four Gospels from the standpoint of the 'Abrahamic Covenant'. Like a series of theological books, the Four Gospels contain all the important Christian theological doctrines, such as Soteriology (doctrine of salvation), Christology (doctrine of Christ), Harmatology (doctrine of sin), Ouranology (doctrine of heaven), Christian anthropology, doctrine of sanctification, doctrine of the

Trinity, Missiology (doctrine of missions), Eschatology (doctrine of the end times), and so on. Each of the doctrines listed here is a very important topic; none of them can be ignored. However, this book will specially focus on missiology which would be the urgent need for us today. The reason is that Jesus was sent to this world for the very purpose of missions, and the commandment He gave us just before His ascension was the Great Commission (Mt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). Moreover, the one core common theme that runs through all Four Gospels is *missions*. So we need to understand specifically how Jesus' words, miracles, and wonders manifest God's will to evangelize the Gentiles.

Evangelization of Gentiles is the area of Christianity that is being most attacked by Satan today. The reason is that once the Gospel is spread to the whole world and reaches all nations, it is written, the end will come (Mt 24:14), and thereafter Satan will be thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:10, 14). That is why the Devil hates the evangelization of Gentiles more than anything and attempts to hinder it as much as possible.

Specifically, the biggest threat to missions today is religious pluralism. Followers of religious pluralism call themselves Christians, but their theology is very wrong. The following summarizes their claims: 'Since God is love (1 Jn 4:16), He will save all mankind (Rom 3:22; 1 Tim 4:10; 2 Pet 3:9; 1 Jn 2:2). There is a Christ in all religions, although each religion has a different name for him (Mt 24:23-28). Therefore, we should not try to evangelize people who follow other religions. When we go out on missions, we should only provide for people's physical needs, such as food, shelter, and clothing - that should be the limit and extent of God's missions (Missio Dei).'

Religious pluralists cherry-pick some verses from the Bible and insidiously use them to hinder the true work of missions. Just like thieves coming only to steal (Jn 10:10), they come into the church and steal ideas from the Bible, in order to distort the Gospel and obstruct missions. This pernicious influence of religious pluralism is spreading like poison.

In the midst of such a corrupt generation, this book intends to arm Christians with a galvanized resolve to evangelize the Gentiles. It will prove, one by one, that Jesus' teachings, miracles, and wonders were meant not merely to convince Christians that God will provide for them their earthly needs, but to teach them to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles according to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. I hope after reading this book, the readers will be able to proclaim clearly that all the events in the Four Gospels, i.e. all the powers Jesus showed, including feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, healing the sick, freeing the demon-possessed, forgiving the sinners, and even reviving the dead were a demonstration of God's will to save the Gentiles as He had promised in the Old Testament).

Missions is not a choice, but a must (1 Cor 9:16). Christians need to know why this work is so important, and to do so, they must understand the Four Gospels clearly. We should not just quote one verse or pick out one event from the Gospels and interpret it in a way that's unrelated to God's will of evangelizing the Gentiles. We must peer through the entire structure of the Bible and, in every biblical event recorded, discern God's will to save all the nations. And we must not only discern His will but obey it. If after receiving the Gospel, we do not make any effort to go out and evangelize

other nations but just try to convert our own family or people, our churches will eventually degenerate, and it may corrupt, and be scattered. Only when Christians understand Jesus' Great Commission (Mt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8) and obey it by going forth toward the Gentiles, then they will be able to receive true life (Mt 8:35; 1 Cor 9:14).

To aid the readers in this purpose, this book provides them various useful information. It utilizes many charts to allow readers to make out at one glance the similarities and differences between each of the Four Gospels. These things are provided to help the readers; so that they can understand the structure of the Four Gospels in a systemic manner. From now on, we need to grow beyond understanding the Four Gospels merely one word, one sentence, or one event at a time. Rather, we need to connect sentence to sentence, connect event to event, connect the Old Testament with the New Testament, and look at the events in the Four Gospels in the context of the big picture.

It is *God's will* to evangelize the Gentiles. In other words, it is the mission of the disciples of Jesus Christ to go out to the chosen children of God scattered among the nations (Jn 15:19), baptize them in the name of the Triune God, teach them the Purpose of Creation (Is 43:7, 21), the Great Commandment, (Ex 20:3-17; Mt 22:37-40), and the Great Commission (Mt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8), and guide them to obey the same. Let them repeat the same process for the coming generations. This is the purpose for which I wrote this book, and I sincerely pray that through this book the Triune God alone will be glorified.

Thomas Hwang,
August 2015, Suji,
South Korea

Preface – 2nd Edition

Why do we perform overseas missions? Why must we preach the Gospel to people in other countries, when there are so many people in our own countries who do not believe in Jesus? How can we explain missionaries who of their own will go to foreign countries, often barren lands with different foods, different lifestyles, different value systems, and different cultures, and spread the Gospel there, sometimes even to the point of martyrdom? There probably aren't many Christians who can answer these questions with confidence.

When this book "The Four Gospels and The Great Commission" first came out, many Christian readers were surprised by it. Prior to reading this book, they had thought that the acts of Jesus recorded in the Four Gospels were simply about healing the sick and comforting the weak and poor. When they found out that the focus of all these ministries was in fact the evangelization of the Gentiles, they experienced a major paradigm shift. I have lectured on this subject several times in both English and Korean, and every time I do so, many people from different countries admit experiencing the same thing. For this, I give thanks and glory to our Triune God.

Today's Christians are living at a time when the second coming of the Lord Jesus is imminent, and in particular the Gospel has almost

reached the ends of the earth. Thanks to the Internet, smart phones, satellites, and media such as YouTube, Facebook and WhatsApp! The Gospel is now spreading faster than ever before. But at the same time, Satan's attack on missions is commensurately getting ever fiercer, as the Devil too knows the fact: The end time is near. The only way to stand against Satan's attacks is to put on the full armor of God, with the help of Holy Spirit and the Word of God. This book will firmly establish the Biblical basis for missions. I hope it will provide a solid foundation, as well as nutrients for spiritual growth, for those who involve themselves in the work of missions.

Even at this very moment, there are dedicated missionaries all over the world who are endeavoring to evangelize the Gentiles as much as possible. The reason that they are able to do this is that they believe the command that Jesus gave His disciples just before His ascension, the Great Commission, was an order to evangelize all the nations. They also believe that when the Gospel reaches the ends of the earth, Jesus will return, and that at the end they will receive rewards in heaven as the Lord promised. I too have walked this path of Gentile missions always praying that I may eventually end up among this blessed group. Since this would be entirely up to the grace of God, I earnestly pray that not only myself but all the readers of this book will also enter into this same grace.

And now, I am publishing this revised and enlarged 2nd edition. I sincerely pray that this book will encourage many Christians to participate in the work of global missions, and also spiritually revitalize and re-equip those who have already been called for this holy mission.

Thoms Hwang

June 2017

Suji, South Korea

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Chapter One

The Structure and History of the Bible

I. The Structure of the Bible

In order for us to understand the Four Gospels clearly, we first need some background knowledge on the structure of the whole Bible. As we all know, the Bible is comprised of two parts, the Old Testament and New Testament. There are 39 books in the Old Testament, and 27 in the New Testament, for a total of 66 books. These books were written by about 40 authors.

These 66 books are arranged in a precise fashion. When the books of the Bible are grouped by similarity, each of the Old and New Testaments can be divided into four sections. The Old Testament books can be divided into Law, History, Poetry, and Prophets, and the New Testament books can also be divided into the Four Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Revelation. Since each book of the Bible is arranged so as to be organically linked with the one preceding it and the one following it, we can clearly grasp God's will within the Four Gospels only when we approach them with an understanding of this overall structure of the Bible.

1. The Structure of the Old and New Testaments

(1) Four Sections of the New Testament

① the Law of Moses

The Law of Moses, the first section of the Old Testament, is comprised of the 5 books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. They are sometimes simply called the Law. They are also called the Torah, or Pentateuch. When Jesus referred to 'Moses', there were times when He meant not Moses the person but the Pentateuch (Lk 24:27, 44). Some conservative Jewish sects still only accept Torah as the Word of God; and they do not accept the other books of the Old Testament as Holy Scripture.

② History

The second section of the Old Testament is History, comprised of 12 books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. These historical books deal with the actual history of Israel.

③ Poetry

The third section is Poetry, comprised of five books – Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. These books employ poetic forms such as rhythm and meter, metaphor, repetition of similar words/phrases, and so on.

④ Prophets

The fourth section is Prophets, which includes 17 books. These books are divided into two sub-categories, Major Prophets and Minor Prophets, based on book length. Major Prophets includes Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentation, Ezekiel, and Daniel, and Minor Prophets includes Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

The Old Testament, comprised of these 39 books, has one sole purpose: to teach about "Jesus, who is to come". It teaches that Jesus will come to this world to save humankind. And just as the Old Testament foretold, Jesus came. Jesus came and testified that the whole of the Old Testament is about Himself (Lk 24:27, 44; Jn 5:39).

(2) Four Sections of the New Testament

The New Testament is comprised of a total of 27 books and it is structurally divided into four sections: the Four Gospels, Acts, Epistles (21 books), and Revelation.

① Four Gospels

The first section of the New Testament is the Four Gospels, comprised of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The Four Gospels can be subdivided into the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John. The Synoptic Gospels are the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which share the same perspective of Jesus. Synoptic means 'syn-' (together) '-optic' (seeing).

Gospel	Perspective of Jesus	
Matthew	The King of Kings	Jesus's Humanity (Synoptic Gospels)
Mark	The Suffering Servant	
Luke	The Son of Man	
John	The Son of God	Jesus's Divinity

Table 1-1. The Themes of the Four Gospels

So what kinds of perspective do Matthew, Mark, and Luke share? These three authors focus on the “human Jesus” who incarnated into this world as a man. Matthew portrays Jesus as the King of Kings, Mark, as the Suffering Servant, and Luke, as the Son of Man (who came from Heaven). These descriptions all deal with the human side of Jesus. While the authors of the Synoptic Gospels do acknowledge Jesus’ divinity, what they have in common is that they put relatively more emphasis on Jesus’ humanity. On the other hand, the Gospel of John focuses on Jesus’ divinity. John stresses that Jesus is the Son of God, and says that Jesus Himself is God.

② Acts

The second section of the New Testament is Acts, a history book written by Luke. This book covers events from 30 - 62 AD, in other words, from the ascension of Jesus (AD 30) to Paul’s first imprisonment (AD 60~62). It records how Jesus’ disciples and the apostles obeyed the Great Commission, how the Early Church was started, the works that the Church did, and what kinds of problems and theological issues arose within the Church. The two main characters in the book are Peter and Paul; in terms of emphasis, the book devotes the most space to Apostle Paul’s ministry.

③ Epistles

The third section is Epistles, consisting of books written in letter format. While there were several authors, more than half of the epistles were written by Apostle Paul. Excluding Hebrews (the author of which is uncertain, it was either Paul or Barnabas), Paul wrote 13 epistles, namely Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. James wrote the epistle of James, Peter wrote the two epistles 1 Peter and 2 Peter, and Jude wrote the epistle of Jude. John wrote the three epistles 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John; he also wrote two other books, the Gospel of John and Revelation.

God gave the authors of the epistles detailed instruction about the Christian doctrines. Almost all the Christian doctrines are discussed in the epistles, including the doctrine of the Trinity, doctrine of God, Christology, soteriology, Christian anthropology, hamartiology, doctrine of sanctification, doctrine of evangelism, missiology, ecclesiology, eschatology, and so on.

④ Revelation

The fourth and final section of the New Testament is the Book of Revelation, situated at the end of the Bible. Revelation was written by John in AD 95, when he was exiled on the island of Patmos (Rev 1:9). It is a book of prophesy and reveals what will happen in the End Times. The book of Revelation ends with a promise spoken by Jesus Himself, "Yes, I am coming soon." The crux of the New Testament consisting of 27 books is that "Jesus has come", and the last book Revelation tells us that "Jesus will return soon".

2. The Authors of the Old and New Testaments

There are about 40 authors of the Old and New Testaments. The first author of the Bible was Moses (~1500 BC), and the author of the last book, Revelation, was John, who wrote the book around in 95 AD. So the Bible was written from 1500 BC to 95 AD, during a period spanning 1,600 years, by about 40 authors.

These authors had diverse backgrounds; they were from different regions (even from different continents, cultures and languages), had different levels of education, different upbringings / social backgrounds, different temperaments, and so on. They were different in many aspects. Their occupations were varied as well; farmer, fisherman, teacher, scholar, tax collector, doctor, prophet, layman, etc.

Moreover, the books of the Bible were all written in different circumstances. Not only did 40 different authors write the Scriptures, they all wrote their books in different historical settings, in different locations, in different time periods, and in different languages. Most of the authors of the Old Testament wrote in Hebrew; however, many parts of the books of Ezra, Daniel, and the Talmud were written in Aramaic. Most of the New Testament authors wrote in Greek, but some parts were written in Aramaic as well. Aramaic was a commonly used language in the Middle East at the time. (Jesus too spoke a dialect of Aramaic.)

But in spite of these varied backgrounds, the Bible presents one common theme: "Jesus Christ". The Old and New Testaments

testify in unison about Jesus Christ. Jesus also said Himself that the Bible is a testimony about Himself. He says in John 5:39, "You diligently study the Scriptures [the Old Testament] because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about Me." There are a number of such passages in the Bible (Lk 24:27, 24:44; Jn 5:46). So no matter what part of the Bible we are reading (Old Testament or New Testament), we should be able to discover and understand Jesus and His plan of salvation towards the mankind.

The reason all 66 books of the Bible speak in one voice is that they were all inspired by the one Holy Spirit (2 Tim 3:16). Though the Bible was written by many authors over a very long period of time, since all the Scriptures were inspired by the same Holy Spirit, they testify about Jesus Christ in a completely consistent manner. Is there any other book available in the world which was written over such a long period as 1,600 years by 40 different authors and in more than 3 different languages, which presents one common theme from the first page to the last? No! Absolutely Not! If you look at the scriptures of some other religions which are said to have been written a long time ago, they have been mostly discarded because they don't fit with the times / they don't fit chronologically, or they are full of mythical stories that contradict each other. 1,600 years is a very long time, far longer than we can imagine.

Apostle Paul too testifies that the Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly

equipped for every good work." Here, "God-breathed" means the authors were directly inspired by God to write the Scriptures. Verse 17 also explains the reason the Bible was written, which was to "make whole" the children of God. This term has profound meaning and I hope I will have the opportunity to discuss it in depth at a later time.

3. The Purpose of the Bible

The purpose of the Old Testament is to herald the first coming of Lord Jesus. "Jesus is coming", this theme is repeated throughout the Old Testament. On the other hand, the New Testament is about the fact that "Jesus has come," and that "Jesus will come again."

The Four Gospels in the New Testament deal with the story of Jesus' first coming as a Messiah. They relate how Jesus came into this world, how He lived, what He taught, what works He did, what He said and what miracles He performed, etc. They are records of Jesus' birth, genealogy, childhood, lifestyle, and teachings, as well as His crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension.

All four Gospel authors conclude their Gospel narratives with the Great Commandment (Ex 20:1-17; Mt 22:37-40) and the Great Commission (Mt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). The Great Commandment consists of the Vertical Commandment (Ex 20:3-11; Mt 22:37-38) and the Horizontal Commandment (Ex 20:12-17; Mt 22:39). The Vertical Commandment contains God's purpose in Creation (Isa

43:7, 21). The Horizontal Commandment is the new commandment of love given onto the children of God (Jn 13:35). As a consequence of the Vertical and Horizontal Commandments, Christians must go out into the world and bear witness to Jesus. In fact this is the Great Commission. The fact that all four Gospels end with the Great Commandment and the Great Commission shows us, without any shadow of a doubt, what Jesus' will toward Christians is.

Jesus' disciples indeed obeyed the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. The Acts of the Apostles (Book of Acts), which follows the Four Gospels, shows us clearly how the disciples obeyed the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. The Book of Acts is the detailed history of the missions work of Jesus' disciples spanning about thirty years in the First Century (30 to 62 AD).

The Book of Acts ends with chapter 28. However, missions history is still being written. In a way, the 29th chapter of Acts has been in the writing from 62 AD continuously to this day, into the 21st century. Thus we are still living in the Acts 29 period of history. However, right now is a particularly important and urgent time in terms of missions, because the Second Coming of Jesus is now before our very eyes.

Time	Book	Author	Book	Num
Old Testament: "Jesus is coming!"				39
1500 BC	Law	Moses	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	5
	History	Joshua, et al.	Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther	12
	Poetry	David, Solomon, et al.	Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs	5
400	Prophets	Major Prophets	Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentation, Ezekiel, Daniel	17
		Minor Prophets	Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi	
New Testament: "Jesus has come!"				27
50 AD	4 Gospels	Matthew, et al.	Matthew, Mark, Luke, John	4
	History	Luke	Acts	1
	Epistles	Paul	Rom, 1 & 2 Cor, Gal, Eph, Phi, Col, 1 & 2 Thess, 1 & 2 Tim, Titus, Phil	21
		(Paul or Barnabas)	Hebrews	
		James	James	
		Peter	1 Peter, 2 Peter	
		John	1 John, 2 John, 3 John	
Jude	Jude			
95	Prophecy	John	Revelation: "Jesus will come again!"	1

Table 1-2. The Bible's Structure

II. History of the Bible's Compilation

The Bible we use today took many years to become one book. The Bible took 1,600 years just to be written down. So, linking the vast amount of manuscripts into one book was not an easy task. The original authors of the Bible wrote the messages they received from God on papyrus or sheep-skin. However, due to difficulties in preservation, the original manuscripts were lost, and the original messages were passed on in the form of various written copies and oral traditions. After some time, the work of compiling these messages into one book and canonizing the books of the Bible began.

1. How the Old Testament Became a Single Volume

Even into the 1st Century AD, the 39 books of the Old Testament were in a scattered state, not yet having been linked into one volume. Only the five Books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) existed as one volume. The rest of the books of the Old Testament were floating around individually.

The Old Testament books finally became canonized into one volume in 90 AD. At that time, Jewish scholars gathered in the city of Jamnia, located about 20 km south of Joppa in Israel, to compile the Old Testament books into the single volume which we are familiar with. Today, we call these 39 books of the Old Testament, the Old Testament canon.



Image 1-1. The Great Isaiah Scroll (a copy of the Book of Isaiah recorded on sheep-skin parchment). One of the seven Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in Qumran in 1947. At a total length of 734 cm, it is the largest and best preserved copy. While there are some damaged parts, it contains the entire Book of Isaiah in Hebrew. The Great Isaiah Scroll, 2nd-1st Century BC, Qumran Cave 1; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem (dss.collections.imj.org.il).

2. How the New Testament became a Single Volume

It took a long time as well for the New Testament part of the Bible to take its present form familiar to us. It took fifty years for the individual New Testament books just to be written down. Galatians was the first New Testament book to be written (49 AD). The Four Gospels were written between 50 and 70 AD. The epistles were also written during this time. Finally, the Book of Revelation, the last book of the New Testament, was written in 95 AD. All these books floated around as individual books until they were compiled into one New Testament canon 300 years later, at the 3rd Council of Carthage (397 AD). Let's briefly discuss how this compilation took place.

(1) The Quelle Document

After Jesus' death on the cross in 30 AD, many individuals wrote records concerning him. Many things concerning Jesus were recorded: Jesus' birth, life, lifestyle, teachings, death, resurrection, ascension, etc. But all these individual records remained as separate fragments instead of being collected into one account.

These source materials can be grouped into three categories. The first category of sources is the 'oral tradition' passed on by word of mouth from person to person. At the time, Matthew, Mark, and John were all well-versed in the oral tradition. The second

category of sources is the 'written fragments/pieces'. And the third category is the 'official documents/sources' from the past.

Bible scholars came to call these three types of sources the Quelle Document, or "Q" Document. This was a name coined by German theologians. "Quelle" means "material" or "source", in German. So taking the first letter of the word Quelle, The New Testament source materials that existed before the Four Gospels are called the "Q" Documents. Although fragmentary in form, these materials were an important foundation for the writing of the New Testament. Among the Four Gospels, especially the Synoptic Gospels were written drawing heavily from the Q Documents.

(2) Canonization of the New Testament

After the Four Gospels, the rest of the New Testament books including the Book of Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation were successively written by the end of the 1st Century AD. However, since these books floated around individually, people had to read them as individual books. Not only were the individual books not yet collected into a single volume, the term "New Testament" did not even exist yet. This state of things lasted for around three hundred years.

Then finally in 397 AD, the work of turning the New Testament books into a single volume got underway. The Christian leaders gathered in one place to consolidate all the fragments of the New Testament. This meeting came to be called the 'Third Council of Carthage'. It was held in the city of Carthage, located on the Mediterranean coast of what is now the North African nation of

Tunisia. According to Christian history, several Councils were held in Carthage. Among these, the one held in 397 AD, the Third Council of Carthage is famous for having canonized the New Testament.

Testament	Time	Place	Persons	Action
Old Testament	90 AD	The Council of Jamnia	Jewish scholars	Canonized the 39 books of the Old Testament
New Testament	397AD	The Third Council of Carthage	Early Church leaders	Canonized the 27 books of the New Testament

Table 1-3. The canonization of the Bible

3. Bible’s Chapters and Verses

So now, both the Old Testament (90 AD) and the New Testament (397 AD) were canonized. However, the Bible was still very inconvenient to read, as it was not yet divided into chapters and verses. So in 1228 AD, Cardinal Stephen Langton of Canterbury, England, (with the help of the Holy Spirit), divided all the books of the Old and New Testaments into chapters. The total number of chapters came to 1,189. The first Bible to incorporate this chapter division was the Wycliffe English Bible of 1382 AD.

The division of the Bible into verses took place two hundred years after its division into chapters. The Old Testament was the first to be divided into verses. This was done in 1448 by R. Nathan, a Jewish scholar living in France. And 100 years later, in 1551 or 1555, a Frenchman named Robertus Stephanus, a.k.a. Etienne, divided the New Testament into verses. The total number of verses in the Old and New Testaments came to 31,173. Afterwards, the first complete Bible incorporating chapters and verses was produced. This was the 'Geneva Bible', an English translation published in 1560.

Time	Person	Action	
1228 AD	Stephen Langton	Divided the Old and New Testament into chapters (1,189 chapters)	
1382 AD	John Wycliffe	"The Wycliffe English Bible": the first Bible that was divided into chapters	
1448 AD	R. Nathan	Divided the Old Testament into verses	Bible contains 31,173 verses.
1551 AD	Robertus Stephanus	Divided the New Testament into verses	
1560 AD	William Whittingham, et al.	"The Geneva Bible" : the first Bible divided into chapters and verses	

Table 1-4. Organization of the Bible into chapters and verses

4. History of the Bible's Translation

(1) The Septuagint, LXX

The Old Testament was mostly written in Hebrew. However, there eventually arose a need to translate this into Greek. The Jews in Diaspora, through many years of living in a Greek cultural environment, had forgotten the Hebrew language. Thus, there was a need for a Greek translation of the Old Testament.

Jews had been residing in foreign lands for a long time. In 722 BC, the Assyrians invaded Israel. At the time, Israel existed as the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The Assyrian Empire (860~626 BC) conquered the Northern kingdom of Israel (2 Kings 17:23), and many Israelites were forcibly taken to Assyria from their homeland. That is how Israelites began to settle in Gentile lands (2 Kings 17:24).

150 years later, the Southern kingdom of Judah as well was conquered by the Babylonian Empire (626~539 BC) (2 Kings 25:8-12). At this time, most of the Jews were forcibly taken to Babylon. (This event is known as the Babylonian Captivity, 586 BC.) 70 years later, the Babylonian Empire fell (Jer. 25:12), but only a small minority of Jews came back to their homeland (about 50,000) (Ezra 2:62-67). The great majority of Jews (about two million) still remained abroad even to the time of Jesus' birth. These Diaspora Jews living in foreign lands came to possess both Jewish culture and the local Gentile culture wherever they had settled. These Diaspora Jews would eventually play an important role in the dissemination of the Gospel to Gentile peoples/nations.

The problem was that these Diaspora Jews had forgotten the Hebrew language. While they lived in Gentile lands for generations, they became more and more assimilated into the local Gentile culture, and gradually they forgot the language of their own people. In addition, Jews parents and elders of Jewish families neglected to teach the younger generations about their traditions. They especially failed to teach them the Old Testament in Hebrew.

At the time, most Mediterranean nations used the (ancient) Greek language. The Diaspora Jews also spoke Greek. At the time, Greek was a common world language, much like English is today. Since the Jews living abroad could only read and write in Greek, they could not read the Hebrew Old Testament.

To remedy this, 70 Jewish scholars gathered in Alexandria, Egypt (284~247 BC). Over a period of 40 years, they translated the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek. And finally a Greek version of the Old Testament was produced for the Greek-speaking Jews. Since this Bible was translated by 70 people, it came to be called the 'Septuagint'. This name is derived from 'septuaginta', the Latin word for "70" - in Roman numerals, it is written as 'LXX' (L: 50, X: 10, X: 10).

(2) The Vulgate

After the fall of the Greek Empire (330~63 BC), the Roman Empire (63 BC~476 AD) ruled over the Mediterranean region for a long time. Though the official language of the Roman Empire was Latin in the early days of the Roman Empire, Greek was more widely used than Latin. But as time passed, the proportion of Latin

speakers grew more and more. Thus, there was again a strong need to translate the Greek Bible into Latin. Eventually a man named Jerome (348~420 AD) translated both the Old and New Testaments into Latin. This Bible, completed around in 405 AD, was called the 'Vulgate'.



Image 1-2. Codex Amiatinus, the oldest copy of the Vulgate Bible. The Codex Amiatinus is considered the oldest and most accurate of the Latin Vulgate Bibles. It was produced in England around 8th Century AD as a gift for the Pope. The Codex Amiatinus, 8th Century AD, Northumbria; The Bibliotheca Laurentiana, Florence, Italy.
Licensor: Remi Mathis (CC BY-SA 4.0).

(3) Other Languages

Besides Greek and Latin, the Bible was also translated into Egyptian dialect in the 6th Century. Later it was also translated into Ethiopian and Syrian dialect. The New Testament was translated into Arabic for the first time in 720 AD, which event was about 90 years after the death of Mohammed (570~632 AD).

In terms of missions, the translation of the Bible into different new languages is a very important indicator of progress. Translation of the Bible into other languages was absolutely necessary to spread the Gospel from the Jews more and more to the Gentiles. From as far back as the 7th Century BC, God allowed Israelites to settle abroad assimilating themselves with those people who used to speak different languages and practice different cultures. Actually it was the preparation period to translate the Bible into many languages. In the end, this was all part of God's plan to evangelize the entire world. As we illuminate the Four Gospels in the course of this book, we will be able to understand more clearly that how our loving God made His divine plan to save the Gentiles.

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CHAPTER 2

Outline of the Four Gospels

I. The Historical Background of the Four Gospels

The term 'Four Gospels' refers to the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Mark, the Gospel of Luke, and the Gospel of John. As it already was mentioned briefly in the previous chapter, the Four Gospels fall into two categories. The first three Gospels, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels. The Gospel of John is considered separate, because it was written from a different point of view than the Synoptic Gospels. The Synoptic Gospels focus specifically on Jesus' humanity, whereas the Gospel of John is focused on Jesus' divinity. This point of difference will be explained in more detail in the course of this book.

Not only were the Four Gospels written from different perspectives, the authors' backgrounds were also very different. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all differed from one another in terms of occupation, level of education, cultural background, ancestral tribe, family background, and home region. And they were even ethnically different. Luke was in fact a Gentile doctor from Antioch (Col 4:14). At the time, ethnocentrism was deeply rooted among Jews. It is interesting that in spite of this fact, God chose a Gentile to author one of the Four Gospels. This was a manifestation of God's will to provide salvation to the Gentiles. The Four Gospels also differ in the purposes for which they were written.

The Gospel of Matthew was the first Gospel to be written (50~52 AD). Matthew's Gospel was meant for the Jewish Christians of his day. Matthew's purpose was to provide theological knowledge and information to fresh Jewish converts to Christianity. Matthew's account starts out with Jesus' genealogy. It covers Jesus' birth, childhood, miracles, parables, teachings, and events during Jesus' life. The account concludes with Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross and His resurrection. Thus the Gospel of Matthew was a comprehensive textbook for Jewish Christians.

For this reason, the Gospel of Matthew was rather difficult to understand for Gentile Christians. The subject matter, vocabulary, and expressions comprised in the Gospel of Matthew were all familiar to Jewish readers. But for Gentile readers unfamiliar to such things, it made the Gospel inconvenient for them to comprehend. This is why God chose Luke, a Gentile, and inspired him by the Holy Spirit to write the Gospel of Luke. Luke's Gospel was the second to be written (60~62 AD); it was written about ten years after the Gospel of Matthew (50~52 AD). Luke was a Gentile doctor and historian by profession. Therefore, he was well qualified to write the Gospel from a Gentile point of view. And since he was a historian, Luke was able to illuminate Jesus' works and deeds chronologically, in an organized and logical manner. In addition, he emphasized on the humanity Jesus as: 'the Son of Man'(Lk 6:5, 9:26, 11:30, 19:10, 22:69, 24:7). God also allowed him to write another book of the Bible: 'The Acts of the Apostles'.

The next Gospel to be written was the Gospel of Mark (65~68 AD). To understand the Gospel of Mark, one must first understand the times in which it was written. At the time, Christians were undergoing through severe persecution from Nero, the 5th Roman emperor (15~68 AD, reign 54~68 AD). In 64 AD, Nero even set the city of Rome on fire and blamed Christians for it. Due to this suspicion, many Christians were persecuted. And one year later in 65 AD, Apostle Peter was executed in Rome by upside-down crucifixion. Since the persecution getting worse by the day and deprived of their top leader, Christians were in desperate need of courage, consolation, and hope in order to endure their miserable plight.

This was the background in which God inspired Mark to write the Gospel of Mark. This Gospel was written during the apex of the persecution against Christians, the period from 65 to 68 AD. There is much overlap in contents in between the Gospels of Matthew, Luke and Mark. However, Mark emphasizes the suffering Jesus endured. His message is that we Christians must follow Jesus in His suffering, taking part in and persevering through it. This is the main message of the Gospel of Mark. Mark highlights Jesus' role as the 'Suffering Servant.' His purpose was to give great hope and courage to Christians at the time who were undergoing persecution.

The Synoptic Gospels in general focus on Jesus' humanity. They relate to us when Jesus was born, what His family background was, which tribe He belonged to, how He spent His childhood, how He ministered, what miracles He performed, what He taught, how He suffered, how He died, resurrected, and ascended into heaven, etc. The Synoptic Gospels show us the fact that Jesus was someone

who really existed in human history. Most of the chapters of the Synoptic Gospels are allotted to explaining these human aspects of Jesus. In other words, they focus on the human Jesus.

On the other hand, the Gospel of John highlights Jesus Christ's divinity. It emphasizes the fact that Jesus is God. For this reason, the Book of John records very little about Jesus' personal life. Biographical details such as about Jesus' genealogy, birth, childhood, etc. are entirely omitted. Even he did not put the parables in his Gospel. Instead, the Gospel of John declares right from the start, in Chapter One: 'Jesus is God'. This is a very important characteristic of the Gospel of John that sets it apart from the other Gospels. There are many significant details about the divinity of Jesus are recorded in the Gospel of John, which are not included in other Gospels.

The Gospel of John was the last of the Four Gospels to be written. Its actual time of writing is not definitely known; there are a few different academic theories. But the most plausible one places the time of writing between 68~70 AD. The support for this theory is the reference to the 'Pool of Bethesda' which is mentioned in John 5:2. The 'Pool of Bethesda' that appears in John 5:2 was destroyed alongside the Temple of Jerusalem in 70 AD. But in John 5:2, the present-tense verb ("there is") is used to describe the pool, as though the pool still existed at the time of the Gospel's writing. Therefore, the book must have been written before 70 AD- is a good logic.

Thus, the Four Gospels were written one after the other, according to the needs of the times. The Four Gospels complement each other according to those needs. Together, the

Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John show us that Jesus was simultaneously Totally Human and Totally Divine. They tell us that Jesus (God) came into this world and perfectly carried out His plan of salvation (Jn 19:30). And that before ascending to heaven (Acts 1:9), He commanded His disciples to obey the Great Commandment (Ex 20:3-17; Mt 22:37-39) and the Great Commission (Mt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

Gospel	Author	Time of writing	Main Readership	Format
Matthew	Matthew	50~52 AD	Jewish Christians	Complete textbook about Jesus
Luke	Luke	60~62 AD	Gentile Christians	Chronological history of Jesus' deeds
Mark	Mark	65~68 AD	Jewish/Gentile Christians undergoing persecution	Book on Jesus' suffering
John	John	68~70 AD	Jewish/Gentile Christians	Textbook proving that Jesus is God

Table 2-1. Backgrounds of the Four Gospels

II. The Parables and Miracles in the Four Gospels

The Four Gospels are replete with Jesus' parables and miracles. If we compare the parables and miracles in each of the Four Gospels, we will be able to clearly see the organic relationship between the Four Gospels, and also what differences there are between the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John. Specifically, we will look at four categories: Jesus' parables, Jesus' healing miracles, Jesus' "nature miracles" and miracles where Jesus brought the dead back to life.

1. Parables

(1) Why Jesus Spoke in Parables

When Jesus spoke about the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, He frequently used parables. But why did He speak in parables? Matthew 13:10-12 gives us the answer: "The disciples came to Him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" He replied, "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an

abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.”

	40 Parables	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
1	Lamp on a Stand	5:14-15	4:21-22	8:16-17; 11:33	—
2	Wise and Foolish Builders	7:24-27	—	6:47-49	—
3	New Cloth on Old Garment	9:16	2:21	5:36	—
4	New Wine in Old Wineskins	9:17	2:22	5:37-38	—
5	The Sower	13:3-8, 18-23	4:3-8, 14-20	8:5-8, 11-15	—
6	The Weeds	13:24-30, 36-43	—	—	—
7	The Mustard Seed	13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19	—
8	The Yeast	13:33	—	13:20-21	—
9	Treasure Hidden in the Field	13:44	—	—	—
10	The Pearl	13:45-46	—	—	—
11	The Fishnet	13:47-50	—	—	—
12	The House Owner	13:52	—	—	—
13	The Lost Sheep	18:12-14	—	15:4-7	—
14	The Unmerciful Servant	18:23-34	—	—	—
15	The Workers in the Vineyard	20:1-16	—	—	—
16	The Two Sons	21:28-32	—	—	—
17	The Wicked Tenants	21:33-44	12:1-11	20:9-18	—
18	The Wedding Banquet	22:2-14	—	14:16-24	—
19	The Fig Tree	24:32-35	13:28-29	21:29-31	—

20	The Faithful and Wise Servant	24:45-51	—	12:42-48	—
21	The Ten Virgins	25:1-13	—	—	—
22	The Talents	25:14-30	—	—	—
23	The Sheep and Goats	25:31-46	—	—	—
24	The Growing Seed	—	4:26-29	—	—
25	The Watchful Servant	—	13:34-37	12:35-40	—
26	The Two Debtors	—	—	7:41-43	—
27	The Good Samaritan	—	—	10:30-37	—
28	The Friend in Need	—	—	11:5-8	—
29	The Rich Fool	—	—	12:16-21	—
30	The Barren Fig Tree	—	—	13:6-9	—
31	The Lowest Seat at a Feast	—	—	14:7-11	—
32	The Cost of Discipleship	—	—	14:28-33	—
33	The Lost Coin	—	—	15:8-10	—
34	The Prodigal Son	—	—	15:11-32	—
35	The Shrewd Manager	—	—	16:1-8	—
36	The Rich Man and Lazarus	—	—	16:19-31	—
37	The Owner and his Servant	—	—	17:7-10	—
38	The Persistent Widow	—	—	18:2-8	—
39	The Pharisee and the Tax Collector	—	—	18:10-14	—
40	The Ten Minas	—	—	19:12-27	—

Table 2-2. The 40 parables recorded in the Four Gospels

These verses are rather difficult to accept. It means that even if we all hear Jesus' words, only some will understand them and others won't. In the end, Jesus spoke in parables so that only a few Christians chosen by God, , would be able to understand the mysteries of heaven. In other words, Jesus' parables about heaven are hidden messages for the few chosen Christians; the majority of Christians cannot understand and digest them. Jesus created these mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven from even before the Creation of the world, and hid them away; He only reveals them at the right time to the right people (Mt 13:35; Ps 78:2).

(2) Chart of the Parables in the Four Gospels

There are in total about 40 parables that appear in the Four Gospels. Interestingly, the parables are all recorded in the Synoptic Gospels; and there is not a single parable recorded in the Gospel of John. The following chart lists all the passages in the Four Gospels that contain parables.

2. Miracles

The purpose of all the miracles was to show that Jesus is God. Those miracles performed by Jesus contain the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, which only the few faithful children of God are meant to understand. The majority of people are interested only in the miracles themselves; they are unable to see the deep spiritual

meanings hidden inside them. The Four Gospels contain in total 23 healing miracles, 9 "nature miracles" (miracles where Jesus showed His power over nature), and 3 "raising up the dead" miracles (where Jesus brought dead individuals back to life). We will look at each category of miracles using respective charts.

(1) Healing Miracles

Compared to the Synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of John contains almost no accounts of healing miracles. Only three incidences of healing miracles are found in John (Table 2-3). They are the following: the healing of a royal official's son at Capernaum, the healing of an invalid man at the Pool of Bethesda, and the healing of a man who was blind from birth. Since all the other healing miracles had already been covered repeatedly by the Synoptic Gospels, John only recorded only those three miracles missing from the Synoptic Gospels. Including those three healing miracles in John, there are a total of 23 healing miracles of Jesus recorded in the Four Gospels.

	Healing	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
1	Man with leprosy	8:2-4	1:40-42	5:12-13	—
2	Centurion's servant	8:5-13	—	7:1-10	—
3	Peter's mother-in-law	8:14-15	1:30-31	4:38-39	—
4	Two demon-possessed men in Gadarenes	8:28-34	5:1-15	8:26-35	—
5	Paralytic	9:2-7	2:3-12	5:18-25	—
6	Woman bleeding	9:20-22	5:25-34	8:43-48	—
7	Two blind men	9:27-31	—	—	—
8	Mute demon-possessed Man	9:32-33	—	—	—
9	Man with withered hand	12:10-13	3:1-5	6:6-10	—
10	Blind and mute demon-possessed man	12:22	—	11:14	—
11	Canaanite woman's demon-possessed daughter	15:21-28	7:24-30	—	—
12	Demon-possessed boy with seizures	17:14-18	9:17-29	9:38-43	—
13	Two blind men near Jericho	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43	—
14	Deaf and mute man	—	7:31-37	—	—
15	Demon-possessed man in the synagogue	—	1:23-26	4:33-35	—
16	Blind man in Bethsaida	—	8:22-26	—	—
17	Crippled woman	—	—	13:11-13	—
18	Man with dropsy	—	—	14:1-4	—
19	Ten lepers	—	—	17:11-19	—
20	High priest's servant	—	—	22:50-51	—
21	Royal official's son	—	—	—	4:46-54

22	Invalid man at Bethesda Pool	—	—	—	5:1-9
23	Man blind from birth				9:1-7

Table 2-3. Healing miracles recorded in the Four Gospels

(2) Nature Miracles

There are about nine incidences of “nature” miracles in the Four Gospels. As we know, Jesus is the one who created the universe, including nature and its myriads of denizens (Jn 1:3; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2). He has all authority over heaven and earth (Mt 28:18), all things are under His feet (Rom 11:36; Eph 1:22; Heb 2:8), He has influence and rules over all things (Deut 30:15, 19; Jer 18:6; Lk 12:7), and the life and death- success and failure of all things depends on Him (Deut 30:19; 1 Sam 2:6-7). Therefore, it is not a matter of surprise that Jesus could command nature and perform supernatural miracles over them. However, those who witnessed firsthand and on location the unleashing of Jesus’ supernatural powers felt great fear. Such power-over-nature miracles were more than sufficient to prove to people that Jesus was the Son of God, the Christ, and the Creator!

There are 6 incidences of nature miracles recorded in Matthew, 5 in Mark, 3 in Luke, and 4 in John. But most of these are overlapping accounts. The nature miracles that only appear in one Gospel are the following: Peter finding a coin in a fish’s mouth (found only in Matthew), the miraculously catch of fish (found only in Luke), the miraculous changing of water into wine (found only in John), and the miracle of catching 153 fish (also found only in John).

	Power Over Nature	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
1	Jesus calms the storm	8:23-27	4:37-41	8:22-25	—
2	Jesus walks on water	14:25-27	6:48-51	—	6:19-21
3	Jesus feeds five thousand ("five loaves and two fish")	14:15-21	6:35-44	9:12-17	6:5-13
4	Jesus feeds four thousand ("seven loaves and two fish")	15:32-38	8:1-9	—	—
5	Coin in the fish's mouth	17:24-27	—	—	—
6	Withered fig tree	21:18-22	11:12-14, 20-25	—	—
7	Miraculous catch of fish	—	—	5:4-11	—
8	Changing water into wine	—	—	—	2:1-11
9	Catching 153 fish	—	—	—	21:1-11

Table 2-4. "Nature miracles" recorded in the Four Gospels

(3) "Raising up of the Dead" Miracles

According to Table 2-5, the miracle in which Jesus raises up synagogue leader Jairus' daughter from the dead is recorded in all the Gospels except John. But the story of Jesus raising up the son of the widow of Nain is only found in the Gospel of Luke. And the story of Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, is only found in the Gospel of John.

These three incidences of Jesus raising up from the dead are very profound in meaning. These three people's resuscitation from death is different from Jesus' eternal resurrection. Their return back to life should be classified as "resuscitation" instead of "resurrection," because in due time these resuscitated people become old or sick then died. They were simply brought back to

life once, temporarily. The important thing here is that by bringing the dead back to life, Jesus showed that He is Lord over both life and death (Deut 30:19; 1 Sam 2:6-7). Later, He would demonstrate His lordship over life and death once and for all, through His own sacrificial death on the cross and resurrection.

	Raising of the Dead	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
1	Synagogue leader Jairus' daughter	9:18-19, 23-25	5:22-24, 35-43	8:41-42, 49-56	—
2	Son of the Widow of Nain	—	—	7:11-15	—
3	Lazarus	—	—	—	11:1-44

Table 2-5. "Raising of the dead" miracles in the Four Gospels

(4) Differences between the Four Gospels in Terms of the Recorded Parables and Miracles

Table 2-6 shows clearly the similarities and differences between the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John. We can see that Jesus' parables, healing miracles, nature miracles, and raising of the dead miracles are similarly recorded in the three Synoptic Gospels. However, the Gospel of John does not contain any parables, and it contains merely three healing miracles. On the other hand, nature miracles and raising of the dead miracles are just as emphasized in John as they are in the other Gospels.

We must pay attention to the fact that John contains none of the parables recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. In delivering his message, John does not use indirect methods such as parables or

healing miracles. Rather, He delivers his message directly inspired by the Holy Spirit. He tells the readers upfront that Jesus is the Son of God (Jn 1:34, 49; 3:17; 4:25; 11:27) and the Messiah (Jn 1:41; 4:25; 11:27).

In contrast to the Gospel of John, the Synoptic Gospels especially emphasize Jesus' healing miracles because those are focused on Jesus' humanity. At the time the Gospels were written, people were interested the most in the healing of illnesses. So the Synoptic Gospels highlighted Jesus' healing power and the image of Jesus consoling people.

We have now done a quick comparison of how the Four Gospels handle Jesus' parables and miracles. Through this analysis, we have discovered that the Four Gospels differ in terms of content. The differences are due to the varying historical backgrounds in which the Four Gospels were written and the different purposes for which they were written. From the next chapter on, we will delve into the characteristics and structure of each of the Gospels. We will cover the Gospels in the order in which they were written: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and finally John.

Book	Parables	Healings	Nature Miracles	Raising of the Dead
Matthew	23	13	6	1
Mark	9	12	5	1
Luke	28	15	3	2
John	—	3	4	1

Table 2-6. Number of parables and miracles recorded in each of the Four Gospels

CHAPTER 3

The Gospel of Matthew

I. Background of the Book of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew was written between 50~52 AD. It was written about twenty years after Jesus' ascension in 30 AD. During those twenty years, the early Christian churches were founded. Many Jews and Gentiles accepted the Gospel and became Christians. But in order to teach the early Christians the Gospel and train them well what the faith is, appropriate Christian texts were desperately needed. In such a setting, the Christian texts of the New Testament first began to be written around 50 AD.

The Gospel of Matthew was the third New Testament book to be written. Already in 49 AD, Paul had written the Book of Galatians, and in the same year James had written the Book of James. After that, the Gospel of Matthew was written in 50~52 AD. Looking at the historical settings in which these earlier Christian activities were written will aid greatly in understanding the backgrounds of the Four Gospels, including the Gospel of Matthew.

1. The Earliest Christians

On the night before His death on the cross, during the Last Supper, Jesus made a significant promise to His disciples (Jn 14:16-17). Jesus said that He would ask His Father to send them the

Counselor that is the Holy Spirit (*Paracletos* in Greek). Afterward, when He ascended to heaven, Jesus charged His disciples not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the "gift promised by the Father" (Acts 1:4). It was the promise that the disciples would be baptized in the Holy Spirit. It took 44 days from the time Jesus first made the promise until the promise was fulfilled. (4 days from the Last Supper to the Resurrection, and 40 days from the Resurrection to the Ascension; and the day of Pentecost comes 50 days after Easter).

Those who heard this command from Jesus numbered some 600 early Christians (1 Cor 15:3-8). But out of these 600, only about 120 actually obeyed Jesus' words and waited for the Holy Spirit. The 120, including the 12 disciples, gathered in Mark's upper room and prayed fervently. And on the tenth day of prayer, on the day of Pentecost, there was a strong anointing of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:15-2:5). The 120 or so Christians began speaking in at least 15 different tongues. This amazing spectacle attracted crowds of Diaspora Jews who had arrived in Jerusalem from abroad to observe the feast of Pentecost. They were absolutely stunned to hear these Christians speaking in foreign tongues (Acts 2:5-13). At that moment, Peter stepped forward and spoke to the crowds, witnessing about Jesus (Acts 2:14-36). As a result, about 3,000 of the Jewish onlookers converted to Christianity on the spot (Acts 2:41). This is how the first Christian church, the Jerusalem church was born. It all started in Mark's upper room in 30 AD (Acts 2:42-47).

As the disciples started to preach with power and perform miracles and wonders, the Church of Jerusalem multiplied in size.

In Acts chapters 3~4 we see Peter giving his second sermon. After hearing this sermon, 5,000 people (counting only the men) believed in Jesus (Acts 4:4). So in Acts chapter two, 3,000 men came to believe, and in chapter four, 5,000 men came to believe. That makes for a total of 8,000 male converts to Christianity. If we assume that these men's immediate family members also became Christian, it can be safely surmised that the Jerusalem Church grew to at least 20,000 members.

However, despite the rapidly growing size of the church, the Church of Jerusalem concentrated only on spreading the Gospel to fellow Jews only in Jerusalem (Acts 6:7). They didn't really show interest in spreading the Gospel to non-Jews going out. Now, before ascending to heaven, Jesus gave the Great Commission to His disciples numerous times (Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15; Lk 24:47; Jn 20:21; Acts 1:8). In the Great Commission, Jesus commanded His disciples to spread the Gospel to Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (not just in Jerusalem; Acts 1:8). But the Church of Jerusalem did not heed this command. Rather, we can see in the Book of Acts that the members of the Jerusalem Church devoted much of their time to the task of bringing salvation to fellow Jews and serving or meeting the needs of church members (Acts 6:1-2).

As a result, Jesus began the task of scattering the members of the Jerusalem Church, through persecution. One day, Stephen (Acts 6:5), one of the seven deacons of the Jerusalem Church, was martyred while delivering a sermon (Acts 7:54-60). Starting with this incident, a great persecution came upon the Church of Jerusalem. Save for the twelve disciples, the Church started to scatter in all directions, fleeing the persecution (33 AD; Acts 8:1).



Map 3-1. Important Cities in First Century Christian History

They scattered to the rest of Judea, Samaria, and further north to Damascus (Syria) and Antioch. Then, they scattered still farther up to the areas of present-day Turkey; the provinces of Galatia, Asia, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Bithynia. But they did not stop there. They even spread to Macedonia, north of Greece, and to the rest of the Roman Empire.

These scattered Jewish Christians established new churches where they settled. The Church of Antioch in Syria was the first major church established outside of Israel. The Church of Antioch is notable in that it began to spread the Gospel not only just to Jews, but to Gentiles as well. As the Gentiles also began to accept Jesus as the Son of God, Christ, and Savior, the number of people spreading the Gospel kept growing. It was at this time that the followers of Jesus began to be called "Christians" officially (Acts 11:26). The Church of Antioch was founded around in 33 AD; one of its central figures was Simon of Cyrene (Acts 11:19-21). (This Simon is the one who carried the cross for Jesus on the day Jesus was crucified (Lk 23:26).) Later, with the arrival of Apostle Paul (Acts 11:25-26), the Antioch Church became a missions center for the evangelization of Gentiles (Acts 13:4-21:16). So only three or so years after Jesus' ascension and the founding of the Jerusalem Church (30 AD), Gentile missions began in earnest in 33 AD.

BC	4	Jesus is born
AD	5	Paul is born
	26	Jesus begins ministry
	30	Jesus' crucifixion/resurrection/ascension Jerusalem church started
	33	Jerusalem church scattered Antioch church started
	35	Paul's conversion
	45	Paul arrives at Antioch church
	46	Paul's 1 st missionary journey
	48	
	49	Council of Jerusalem Paul writes Book of Galatians James writes Book of James
	50	Paul's 2 nd missionary journey
	52	
		Matthew writes Book of Matthew
	68	Paul martyred

Table 3-1. Time period when the books of Matthew, James, and Galatians were written

2. Christian Texts Written Before the Gospel of Matthew

(1) Galatians (49 AD)

With the start of Gentile missions, a character named Paul enters the scene. He is the first mentioned under the name Saul at the scene where Deacon Stephen is martyred. ("Saul" was Paul's original Hebrew name.) At the time, Paul was not a Christian. Rather, he was one of the foremost persecutors of Christians (Acts 7:54-8:3). One day while relentlessly chasing after Christians to arrest them, Paul met Jesus through a bright light on his way to Damascus (the capital of Syria), and wound up converting to Christianity (35 AD) (Acts 9:1-19). After his conversion, Paul underwent about ten years of spiritual training and then joined the Church of Antioch's ministry in 45 AD (Acts 13:1-3). From this point on in the Book of Acts, the stories concerning the twelve disciples tapered off. The flow of the story of Acts changes to focus on the missions works of the early Church, centering on Apostle Paul.

From 46 AD, Paul began to go out on missions journeys to evangelize the Gentiles. One year after Paul's arrival at the Church of Antioch, Paul and Barnabas went on their first missions journey, which lasted two years, from 46 to 48 AD (Acts 13:4-14:28). On this first missionary journey, Paul traveled via the island of Cyprus (present-day Republic of Cyprus) to Lystra (Timothy's hometown) which is south of Galatia. Then, after reaching Derbe, Paul turned

back and returned back to Antioch. But upon his arrival, he noticed a problem had arisen. The messages that Paul had preached in the regions south of Galatia had begun to cause a stir within Jews.

Now, Paul's main teaching was that we are saved by the grace of Jesus Christ alone. The theme of Paul's teaching was that salvation does not come from observing the Old Testament laws, but rather that salvation has been achieved for us through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, by the grace of God. This clearly meant that the observance of the Law was not a prerequisite for salvation. From our viewpoint today, Paul's stance regarding the Old Testament seems straightforward. However, for Christians of Paul's time, it was truly shocking. Particularly for the Jewish Christians who had immigrated to southern Galatia, fleeing the persecution of the Jerusalem Church, Paul's teachings caused confusion amongst them. Why? Because Paul's teaching was different from what the twelve disciples had taught them. The twelve disciples had taught them that in order to be saved, it was also necessary to keep the Old Testament laws together with their faith in Jesus Christ.

So when he was back in Antioch after finishing his first missionary journey, Paul started to hear many complaints about what he had taught in Galatia. Rumors started spreading that Paul's teachings were incorrect, even heretical. The Jewish Christians' suspicions toward Paul only worsened because they felt that Paul was saying uncomfortable things about their original teachers in the faith, the disciples of Jesus.

Paul, unlike Peter and James, was not a direct disciple (original apostle) of Jesus. Nor was he a founding member of the Church of

Jerusalem. In the eyes of those who were suspicious of Paul, Paul lacked spiritual root, so to speak. Therefore, the authenticity of his teachings could not be established but be questioned. So in order to address these issues, Paul wrote a letter from Antioch to Galatian Christians in 49 AD. This letter is the Book of Galatians.

Galatians was Paul's first epistle. He wrote it, immediately after returning from his first missionary journey (49 AD). In the epistle, Paul explained the messages he had preached in southern Galatia in a more logical and organized manner. His intent was to put to rest the suspicions concerning his teachings which were spreading from Galatia, and also to firmly establish the message that salvation is through the grace of Jesus.

The main topic of the Book of Galatians is the relationship in between the Old Testament laws and grace. Paul sets out in detail that salvation cannot be attained through adherence to the Law, and that salvation can be received only through the grace of Jesus Christ. He explains that the Old Testament laws is merely a "guardian" (or tutor) which guides and leads us to Jesus Christ (Gal 3:24). Without the laws, there is no way for us to know what sin is. God gave us the Old Testament laws so that we could understand what sin is.

However, as much as we may try to escape from sin by keeping the laws, we only wind up realizing that it is impossible for us to keep all the laws (Gal 3:10). In other words, human beings are incapable of escaping from sin through their own efforts; they need something else to save them. That is none other than the gracious blood of Jesus Christ. At the end, Paul explains that the Old Testament laws are insufficient for salvation. The law is merely a

medium that guides us to know who Jesus is (Gal 3:24). The law is not an end in itself. Rather, it is only an intermediary that introduces Jesus to us. It is only a "shadow and symbol" of Jesus Christ (Heb 8:5; 9:9).

At the time, the "top Christian leaders" such as Peter and James were still watching over the Church of Jerusalem. They too heard steady news from Syria and Asia Minor about Gentiles coming to believe in Jesus. Also, Peter himself had a vision in which he was commanded to eat Gentile foods forcibly (Acts 10:1-23). He was even led by the Holy Spirit to share the Gospel with a Gentile, and he witnessed about Gentiles being baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:24-48). Yet despite all this, leaders such as Peter and James were still not jumping in with both feet when it came to Gentile missions; they were still hesitating.

In Galatians, Paul keenly points them out. In Galatians 2:6-9, he says, "As for those who were held in high esteem - whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism - they added nothing to my message. On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised. For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles. James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised."

This passage clearly shows how Paul felt towards the leaders of the Jerusalem Church. To him, Peter, James, and John

were Apostles who spread the Gospel only to Jews. And Paul was an Apostle to the Gentiles. Paul took great pride in his being an Apostle to the Gentiles - over 99% of the world's population is Gentile. On the other hand, Peter's ministry was limited to Jews. So, there were a vastly greater numbers of people entrusted to Paul. This is why Paul might have felt that he was better than Peter.

In conclusion, the Book of Galatians is about soteriology (the doctrine of salvation). It firmly establishes the Gospel of the *grace of Jesus Christ*. Paul could not but emphasize this theme, because apart from the grace of Jesus Christ, there was no way to explain the salvation of the Gentiles. We will have an opportunity to delve deeper into the relationship between the salvation of Gentiles and the Old Testament in the final chapter, chapter 7. So in any case, the Holy Spirit had the Book of Galatians written right at the point in history when the evangelization of Gentiles was about to begin in earnest through Paul. Through this book, the Holy Spirit lets us know what the essence of salvation is.

(2) James (49 A.D.)

In the same year that Galatians was written, 49 AD, James wrote the Book of James. James, the oldest of Jesus' younger brothers (Mt 13:55), was a top leader of the Jerusalem Church (Acts 15:12-21). Though James was one of the key founding members of the Jerusalem Church, he lost his congregation (Acts 8:1-3) due to the Jews' persecution in 33 AD. Almost all of his congregation scattered, fleeing to regions such as Antioch, Damascus, and the Turkish regions of Galatia, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Bithynia, etc.

As a result, James wound up traveling to the regions where his congregation had fled; he made his rounds teaching the former members of his congregation the Word of God wherever they could be found. He encouraged them to establish new churches wherever they settled, and to grow spiritually in the faith (James 1:1).

Unfortunately, all sorts of internal problems arose within these newly founded churches. For example, there was division, infighting, corruption, slander, complaint, injustice, alienation, etc. Also, the poor Christians, widows, and orphans were being ill-treated by the mainstream members of the churches. As these problems became widespread, the scattered disciples in charge of these new churches requested their teacher, James for help, and James diligently visited these churches. But there was no end to the problems.

So, James wrote a pastoral letter to them in 49 AD; this is the New Testament Book of James. This letter contains almost nothing concerning Christian doctrine or the essence of the Gospel. Instead, the letter is mainly focused about what sort of attitudes Christians should have at church. How to put one's faith into action; how to be united as one church; how to serve one another; how to take care of widows and orphans; why rich Christians should help those less fortunate; how to be a peacemaker instead of a problem maker at church, etc. James mainly deals with pastoral and relational issues within the church. Therefore, the Book of James is more of a pastoral epistle than a theological epistle.

The Book of Galatians and Book of James were texts that were clearly needed by Christians circa 49 AD. While these two books

cannot be considered comprehensive theological texts, they were a big help to Christians of the time. They also served as groundwork of sorts for the development of comprehensive Christian texts such as the Gospel of Matthew.

3. The Absence of Gospel Texts

Through the establishment and scattering of the Church of Jerusalem, many Jews became Christians (Acts 8:1-4; 1 Pet 1:1). But when it came to Jesus' life and teachings, there was no single comprehensive book on the subject. Knowledge about Jesus' life and teachings spread solely by word of mouth or through partial, fragmentary records of the Gospel, which we have already referred as the 'Q' Documents. The already written Christian texts such as the Book of Galatians and James only dealt with partial doctrines and specific issues in Christianity. They were not books that covered Jesus' life, ministry, and teachings in a comprehensive way. There was therefore an urgent need to compile all the partial fragmentary records of Jesus floating around, plus the firsthand accounts of witnesses who had seen and heard Jesus right by His side when He was on earth, into a single complete text.

In this setting, Matthew wrote the first Gospel, the Gospel of Matthew (AD 50~52). Matthew tried to record everything about Jesus. Starting with Jesus' genealogy, he covered Jesus' birth, childhood, public ministry, sermons, death on the cross, resurrection, and ascension. He recorded Jesus' entire life from 4 BC to 30 AD.

The intended audience of this very first Gospel, the Gospel of Matthew, was Jewish Christians. But why? If we look at the order in which the Gospel was spread, the Gospel would first go to a small number of Jews, then it would go entirely over to the Gentiles (Rom 1:16). At the time Matthew wrote his Gospel, the majority of Christians were still Jews. Therefore, Jewish Christians would be the first to be enlightened; then the Gentiles would be next. This is why a Gospel written from a Jewish perspective for Jewish Christians was urgently needed at first. And in Jesus' eyes, Matthew, a Jew tax collector, was the right man for the task.

Pursuant to its purpose, the Gospel of Matthew was written in a way, new Jewish converts to Christianity could easily understand. The Gospel talked about Jewish traditions and ceremonies using expressions familiar to Jews. All the expressions, vocabulary, illustrations, examples, and literary styles used in the book were familiar to Jews, in order to make the book easy for them to understand.

However, the Gospel of Matthew also had the task of gradually awakening these Jews, who had a long history of ethnocentrism, to God's love for His Gentile children. In order to achieve both of these purposes, the author would have to be well-versed in Jewish traditions and at the same time have an attitude of evangelizing the Gentiles. God in fact trained and prepared Matthew for a long time just for this purpose and at the right time, He allowed him to write the Gospel of Matthew.

4. Who was Matthew?

(1) Matthew's Social Background

Matthew was a Jew from Capernaum. (Capernaum was a city where Jesus lived most of His time during His three years of public ministry; it could be called Jesus' "missions center" of sorts.) Matthew was a tax collector in that city. The name 'Matthew' means "the gift of Yahweh", or "the gift of Jehovah". Matthew's original Hebrew name was Levi (Mk 2:14; Lk 5:27). From his Hebrew name, we can tell that Matthew was from the tribe of Levi, and that his family background was priestly. That is, he should have been a priest, not a tax collector.

At the time, Israel was under the control of the Roman Empire (63 BC - 476 AD). In that setting, for a Jew to work as tax collector for the Romans was not something that made him popular among fellow Jews. This was because when they collected taxes in the name of the Roman Empire, tax collectors pocketed a portion of the money for themselves, and delivered the rest of the money to the Roman government. Since Matthew, like the other tax collectors of his time, collected taxes in excess, he was hated by his fellow Jews. People use to assume tax collector as a sinner; Lk 19:7.

Matthew was in fact deeply troubled in his heart concerning his profession. His dilemma was that though he was from a priestly family background, he had an undesirable, unrespectable, and worldly profession of tax collector. Matthew's inner turmoil is well illustrated in Mat. 9:9-13, the scene where Jesus calls Matthew to

follow him: "As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," He told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with Him and His disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked His disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

In this scene, Matthew was sitting as usual at the tax collector's booth in Capernaum. And Jesus happened to be walking by there. As Jesus was passing by Matthew, He said to him, "follow me". And without even a moment's hesitation, Matthew obeyed Jesus' call. Not only that, he invited Jesus to his house for supper. He invited his fellow tax collectors and other sinners to his house as well. Even though Matthew knew that the Pharisees would criticize and authority upon him may punish him for this, he acted without hesitation.

Matthew was in fact someone who was pre-chosen by Jesus to be His disciple (Mt 10:3). This is why, despite the fact that Matthew had a "sinful" profession which earned him the hate of his fellow Jews, he was able to instantly recognize Jesus for who He was and heed His call. Matthew thus became one of Jesus' 12 disciples. He would later go to Ethiopia and spread the Gospel there, as the first Christian missionary to Ethiopia. Not only that, he was martyred in Nubia, Ethiopia in 70 AD (by burning). As the founding father of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Matthew became a torch (Mt 25:1-

13) that shined the light of the Gospel into the spiritual darkness of the African continent.

(2) Why Matthew was Chosen

Jesus chose Matthew even before he was formed in his mother's womb (Jer 1:5). Jesus foreknew him and predestined him, and in God's perfect time (1 Cor 3:1) He called him for His work (Rom 8:29-30). In order to prepare Matthew to fulfill his predestined purpose in life, first, God made sure that he was brought up in a very ideal family background. Compared with Jesus' other disciples, he was grown up from the elite class. He was also from the tribe of Levi, the most respected of the Jewish tribes. His father Alphaeus also was a respected elder (Mk 2:14). Due to his favorable family background, Matthew received a high level of education and had broad knowledge. He was fluent in Greek so that he could write the Gospel of Matthew in Greek.

In addition, Matthew was one of the eye witnesses who observed Jesus' public ministry from right by His side. Matthew was chosen as a disciple in 26 AD, and from that time until Jesus' crucifixion in 30 AD, he spent all of his time with Him. Since he spent 3 years following Jesus, He knew all about Jesus' deeds and had many stories to tell about Him.

Not only that, Matthew was a humble man. He was someone who had long lived with a burden on his heart: he was a sinner who had collected excessive taxes from Jews in order to enrich himself. But one day, he met Jesus, and he was deeply moved by Jesus' forgiveness and saving grace. He was so joyed that he threw

a big feast for Jesus at his house (Lk 5:27-30), even though he knew the Jews around him would frown upon this. He had the humbleness to confess before the Lord that he is a sinner, and not only this, he gave up everything he had to follow Jesus.

In sum, Matthew was well-qualified to write the Gospel of Matthew because he was a Jew who had a high-level, diverse knowledge, and he was an eyewitness who had seen all that Jesus did on the scene.

	Fact (Matthew)	Description
1	Meaning of his Name	"gift of Jehovah God"
2	Hebrew name	Levi (Mk 2:14; Lk 5:27)
3	Hometown	Capernaum
4	Father	Alphaeus
5	Tribe	Tribe of Levi, priesthood
6	Occupation	Tax collector
7	Relationship to Jesus	One of Jesus' original 12 disciples
8	Level of education	Highly educated
9	Character	Humble
10	Book written	Gospel of Matthew
11	Mission Field	Ethiopia
12	Martyrdom	AD 70, Nubia Ethiopia, death by burning

Table 3-2. Facts about Matthew the Apostle

II. The Gospel of Matthew:

Purpose and Characteristics

The Bible is the Word of God. It is the Word of Truth that transcends time. Jesus, in order to give Christians this Word of Truth, prepared the right persons at the right times to write the books of the Bible. The Gospel of Matthew, no exception, was written to fill the urgent spiritual needs of early Christians. Thus, early Christians definitely needed to read the Book of Mathew. However, Christians today must read it as well. The book contains important messages for all Christians; knowing them will establish our faiths on much firmer ground. And now, we will get into what exactly Jesus has to say through the Gospel of Matthew, and what characteristics the book has.

1. To Teach about God's Plan of Salvation for Gentiles

The target audience of the Gospel of Matthew was Jewish Christians. Now, the thing about Jewish Christians was that they were deeply entrenched in ethnocentrism, which made it hard for them to open their hearts toward Gentiles. The Jews thought loftily of themselves because they believed they alone were God's chosen

people. They considered Gentiles as “dogs” or “pigs” (Mt 7:6; 15:26). They even shunned their fellow Jews from abroad, the Diaspora Jews, because they were from Gentile lands and had been exposed to Gentile cultures.

Matthew, having been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, knew that the reason Jesus came to this earth was to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:2-3). We will go into more detail on this topic later in chapter 7. But simply put, the Abrahamic Covenant is the promise God made to Abraham that firstly he and his descendants would be blessed. And secondly, through one of Abraham’s descendants (Jesus), the Gentile peoples would be blessed (Gen 12:2-3). Matthew realized that since Jesus had now already come to the earth (Mt 1:1-17), it was time for the Gentiles to receive the Gospel.

Matthew’s mission was to make Jews understand this fact. This is why Matthew, from the beginning of his Gospel to the end, keeps throwing the readers messages concerning the salvation of Gentiles. Even in the genealogy of Jesus starting in Matthew 1:1, he recorded the names of Gentile women, namely Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and the wife of Uriah (Mt 1:3-6). This was to give Jewish Christians, who were entrenched in the Jewish patriarchal mindset, a fresh wind of interest in Gentiles. Also, Matthew emphasized the fact that even the very first worshippers of Jesus at His birth were Gentiles, namely the Magi from the east (Mt 2:1).

God’s salvation plan for Gentiles is even manifested through Jesus’ parables and miracles. The majority of those who were healed of illnesses or cleansed of demons by Jesus were Gentiles or people who symbolized as Gentiles. The Roman centurion of great

faith (Mt 8:5-13), the Canaanite woman (Mt 15:21-28), the people from the street invited to the wedding banquet (Mt 22:1-14), the scraps of food gathered after the Miracle of 'Five Loaves and Two Fish' (Mt 14:13-21) and the Miracle of 'Seven Loaves and Two Fish' (Mt 15:32-39), "the last who will be first" (Mt 20:1-16), and the "son who obeyed his father" (Mt 21:28-32), etc.. Almost all the stories in the Gospel of Matthew deal with the issue related to the salvation of Gentiles.

At the end of the Gospel of Matthew, in the last chapter and last verse, we find Jesus' Great Commission: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Mt 28:19-20). Matthew ends his Gospel with a command. The command is to make disciples of "all nations" ('panta ta ethne' in Greek), meaning all the Gentile peoples (excluding Jews). So from Matthew 1:1 to Matthew 28:20, the entire book's emphasis is on evangelizing the Gentiles.

2. A Comprehensive Theological Text

Among the Four Gospels, the Gospel of Matthew is the closest to being a comprehensive theological text. There are seven Christian doctrines dealt with in Matthew: Christology, Sanctification, Heaven, Salvation, Christian Leadership, Eschatology, and Missiology.

In terms of Christology, Matthew teaches us about Jesus'

authentic identity. Jesus described as the King of Kings, Christ, Son of God, Son of Man, descendant of Abraham and David, Emmanuel, offspring of the Woman, Lord of Salvation, and the Lord who will come again. Particularly famous is Peter's declaration about Jesus in Matthew chapter 16: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God" (Mt 16:16). Jesus told Peter that He would later build His Church on his confession. The Christology in Matthew is very succinct. The deeper and more detailed aspects of Christology are dealt with in the Gospel of John.

The topic of Sanctification is dealt with in Matthew chapters 5 to 7. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount contains many precious teachings such as the Eight Beatitudes, the 'perfect Christian' (the wholesome Christian), the Fulfillment of the Law, Salt and Light, warnings against hypocrisy, 'do not serve two masters', the Lord's Prayer, the 'speck in your brother's eye', 'Ask, Seek, Knock', the Narrow Gate, etc.

The doctrine of Heaven is dealt with in Jesus' seven parables of the mystery of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 13:1-50). Those parables are the following: the Sower, the Weeds, the Mustard Seed, the Yeast, the Hidden Treasure, the Pearl, and the Fishnet. Jesus spoke in parables because only a few people, namely His disciples, are allowed to understand this mystery (Mt 13:35). In other words, Jesus intends only His disciples, whom He has specially chosen, to understand and carry out the will of God, and to teach it to His children scattered among the nations.

Concerning Salvation, Jesus both directly and indirectly prophesied during His public ministry that He would die and come back to life in three days. In Matthew 12, Jesus alluded, through

the Sign of Jonah, that He would die and rise again in three days (Mt 12:39; 16:4). But at other times Jesus also spoke directly concerning His death on the cross and resurrection (Matthew 16:21, 17:22, 20:19). There are many teachings about Salvation in Matthew chapters 26 to 28, as well.

Christian Leadership is dealt with in Matthew chapter 23. The whole chapter is devoted to this subject. In it we find Jesus' famous teachings such as "do not desire to be called 'Rabbi' (teacher)", "the greatest among you will be your servant", "those who exalt themselves will be humbled", and "do not desire to be called a leader". Also, we find the famous "Seven woes" on the teachers of the law and Pharisees, where Jesus criticizes these Jewish leaders for their hypocrisy.

Eschatology is dealt with in detail in the Discourse on the Mount of Olives. Matthew chapters 24-25 cover in detail the signs of the End Times, and describe what qualifications the "brides of Christ" must meet in order to be gloriously raptured. In these chapters we find Jesus' detailed prophecies concerning the signs of the End, including the emergence of Religiously Pluralistic teachings, wars, famines, earthquakes, people's hatred toward Christians, persecution of Christians, the Gospel finally reaching all the nations, the rebuilding of the Temple of Jerusalem, the independence of the state of Israel, etc.

In particular, we need to pay attention to Jesus' prophecies regarding the emergence of Religious Pluralism. Jesus prophesied that in the End Times false prophets and false messiahs will appear; people will say Christ is here, there, and in many places (Mt 24:4-5, 23-28). In other words, they will preach a false gospel saying that

there is a Christ in all religions; each religion may have a different name for him, but at the end every religion has a Christ and therefore you can get saved through any religion of the world.

Jesus foretold that many Christians would be deceived by this false teaching. This scenario has in fact become reality today. Religious pluralism has infected major Christian churches and denominations including the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox churches, Eastern Rite Catholic churches, the Episcopal/Anglican church, the Methodist denomination, the Baptist denomination, the Presbyterian denomination, Congregational churches, and the Salvation Army. Religious Pluralism is the cult which poses the greatest threat to Christianity today.

In terms of Missiology, Matthew teaches us about the Abrahamic Covenant. Throughout his Gospel, Matthew mentions the relationship between the Jews and Gentiles as regards salvation. In particular, the miracle of 'Five Loaves and Two Fish' and the miracle of 'Seven Loaves and Two Fish' demonstrate this relationship clearly. Missiology is a very important subject and the core common theme of all Four Gospels. Therefore, we will study it in greater detail on its own in chapter 7. The following chart shows the main topics covered in the Gospel of Matthew.

Doctrines in the Book of Matthew	
1	Doctrine of Christology Jesus' identity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus is the Son of God (Mt 3:16) • Jesus is the Son of Man (Mt 8:20) • Jesus is the King of Kings (Mt 1:2-16) • Jesus is Christ (Mt 16:16) • Jesus is the Lord of Salvation (Mt 1:21) • Jesus is the Lord of the Second Coming (Mt 24:3) • Jesus is the Seed of the Woman (Mt 1:18-19) • Jesus is Immanuel (Mt 1:23) • Jesus is a descendant of Abraham and David
2	Doctrine of Sanctification Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it mean to be a "blessed" Christian? • "The Perfect Christian" ("the wholesome Christian", "one who is whole") • The fulfillment of the Law
3	Doctrine of Heaven Mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven - Seven Parables (Mt 13)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parable of the sower • Parable of the weeds • Parable of the mustard seed • Parable of the yeast • Parable of the hidden treasure • Parable of the pearl • Parable of the net
4	Doctrine of Salvation Jesus' blood, Cross, Resurrection
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sign of Jonah (Mt 12:39; 16:4) • Jesus' death and resurrection (Mt 26-28)
5	Doctrine of Christian leadership (Mt 23)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus Christ is the only lord • "Seven woes" on the teachers of the law and Pharisees
6	Doctrine of Eschatology Discourse on the Mount of Olive (Mt 24-25)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of the End Times • Seven parables about the Rapture of the Church

Doctrine of Missiology The order in which the Gospel will be spread	
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First, the Gospel will be given to Jews • Second, the Gospel will be spread to Jews in Diaspora • Third, the Gospel will be spread to Gentiles

Table 3-3. Theological doctrines in the Book of Matthew

III. The Book of Matthew's Structure

The Gospel of Matthew consists of 28 chapters. These chapters are laid out in chronological order, and they can be grouped into eight main sections. Generally, the division of sections is based on time period or changes in locations. These sections can be subdivided further according to specific events and the subject matter of Jesus' teachings. As we look at the structure of the Book of Matthew using charts, I hope that the readers will be able to develop a panoramic perspective with which they can take in the entirety of the Gospel in one glance.

1. The Eight Overall Sections of the Book of Matthew

The Book of Matthew is made up of eight overall sections. Jesus' birth and childhood (Mt 1:1-2:23), Jesus' preparation for public ministry (Mt 3:1-4:11), Jesus' ministry in the region of Galilee (Mt 4:12-15:20), Jesus' ministry in Tyre and Sidon (Mt 15:21-28), Jesus' ministry upon His return to Galilee (Mt 15:29-18:35), Jesus' ministry in the region of Judea (Mt 19:1-20:34), Jesus' Passion Week (Mt 21:1-27:66), and Jesus' resurrection and the Great Commission (Mt 28:1-20). This is summarized in the following chart.

	Passage	Description
1	Mt 1:1-2:23	Jesus Christ's birth and childhood
2	Mt 3:1-4:11	Jesus' preparation for ministry
3	Mt 4:12-15:20	Jesus' ministry in Galilee
4	Mt 15:21-28	Jesus' ministry in Tyre and Sidon
5	Mt 15:29-18:35	Jesus' ministry back in Galilee
6	Mt 19:1-20:34	Jesus' ministry in Judea
7	Mt 21:1-27:66	Jesus' Passion Week
8	Mt 28:1-20	Jesus' resurrection and the Great Commission

Table 3-4. The Book of Matthew's Eight Overall Sections

2. Detailed Structure of the Book of Matthew

The above eight main sections contain many detailed stories within them. Let us look at the content of these stories.

(1) Jesus' Birth and Childhood

The Book of Matthew starts with the story of the birth of Jesus Christ and His childhood. In the beginning, Matthew recounts Jesus' genealogy, emphasizing the fact that Jesus is a descendant of Abraham and David. Matthew then goes on to tell the Jews that Jesus is the "offspring of the woman," mentioned in Gen. 3:15, i.e. the Savior, and that Jesus was born of a virgin. Matthew explains how Jesus' birth fulfilled the prophecies of Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, and Hosea, going through the prophecies one by one. He reveals that even the fact that Jesus would be a Nazarene was foretold through the prophets.

(2) Jesus' Preparation for Public Ministry

Matthew says very little about Jesus' childhood. He instead jumps to the point right before the start of Jesus' public ministry. First, John the Baptist enters the scene, to prepare the way for Jesus. This was in fulfillment of the prophecies given through Malachi (400 years before Jesus, Mal. 4:5-6) and Isaiah (700 years before Jesus, Isa. 40:3). Jesus made His way from Galilee to the

River Jordan, where He was baptized by John the Baptist. Then, after being tested by the Devil in the wilderness, He returned to Nazareth in Galilee.

Jesus Christ's Birth and Childhood (Mt 1:1-2:23)	
1	Genealogy (1:1-17)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descendant of Abraham, descendant of David • Four Gentile Women (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba)
2	Birth (1:18-2:12)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Offspring of the woman", virgin birth (1:18-19) • 'Jesus', name of the Savior (1:21) • 'Immanuel' (1:23, fulfillment of Isa 7:14) • Bethlehem (2:1, fulfillment of Mic 5:2) • The Magi (2:1-12, 'King of kings')
3	Escape to Egypt, Return to Nazareth (2:13-23)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escape to Egypt (2:13-18; Hos 11:1) • Return to Nazareth and settlement there (2:19-23) • Jesus the Nazarene (2:23)

Table 3-5. Jesus Christ's Birth and Childhood

Jesus' Preparation for Ministry (Mt 3:1-4:11)	
1	God sends John the Baptist (3:1-12)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To prepare the way for Jesus
2	Jesus is baptized in the River Jordan (3:13-17)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holy Trinity (3:16-17) • Jesus, Son of God (3:17)
3	Jesus is tested in the wilderness (4:1-11)

Table 3-6. Jesus' Preparation for Ministry

(3) Jesus' Ministry in Galilee

The starting point of Jesus' public ministry was the city of Capernaum, in the region of Galilee. Matthew devotes ten chapters out of the total 28 relating the account of Jesus' public ministry in Galilee. Jesus left His hometown Nazareth and moved to Capernaum, located by the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum served as Jesus' "missions center" during His three years of public ministry.

Before embarking on His ministry in earnest, Jesus chose His 12 disciples (Mt 10:2-3). Accompanied by His disciples, Jesus made His rounds in the Galilee region, spreading His message, teaching in parables, and performing miracles. Among Jesus' sermons, the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew chapters 5-7), is particularly famous. The sermon is thus named because Jesus preached it on a mountain (Mount of Beatitudes) overlooking Capernaum. The subject of the sermon was "blessedness" or "ones who are blessed". These three chapters in Matthew are devoted to the topic of the Sanctification of Christians.

Afterward, Jesus began making a concerted effort to make His disciples aware of His true identity. Through diverse miracles (Mt 8:1-9:38; 14:13-15:20) and teachings (Mt 11:1-14:12), Jesus taught His disciples who He was, the purpose for which He came into the world, and what He expected of them. He did this while ministering in the region of Galilee.

Jesus' Ministry in Galilee (Mt 4:12-15:20)	
1	Jesus' return to Nazareth (4:12)
2	Settlement in Capernaum (4:13-17)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capernaum was the base of Jesus' ministry for 3 years
3	Jesus calls His first four disciples (4:18-22)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrew, Peter, James, John
4	Jesus heals the sick and demon-possessed (4:23-25)
5	The Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Blessed (5:3-12) • Salt and Light (5:13-16) • The Law vs. grace (5:17-48) • The Lord's Prayer (6:9-13) • Two masters (6:19-24) • The narrow path (7:13-14) • The house built on rock (7:24-27)
6	Jesus' miracle ministry (8:1-9:38)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heals man with leprosy (8:2-4) • Heals Centurion's servant (8:5-13) • Heals Peter's mother-in-law (8:14-15) • Calms the storm (8:23-27) • Casts out demons (8:28-34) • Heals a paralytic (9:1-8) • Calls Matthew as disciple (9:9-13) • Raises synagogue leader Jairus' dead daughter (9:18-26) • Heals the sick (9:27-38)
7	Sends out the 12 disciples (10:1-42)

Table 3-7. Jesus' Ministry in Galilee

8	Jesus' Teachings (11:1-14:12)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus praises the ministry of John the Baptist (11:1-19) • Woe on unrepentant towns (11:20-24) • The mystery of the kingdom of God (11:25-30) • Jesus, Lord of the Sabbath (12:1-14) • Satan's identity (12:22-37) • The Sign of Jonah (12:38-45) • Seven parables about the kingdom of heaven (13:1-52) • The death of John the Baptist (14:1-12)
9	Jesus' Lordship over Nature (14:13-33)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeds five-thousand with five loaves and two fish (14:13-21) • Walks on water (14:22-33)
10	Jesus' Ministry at Gennesaret (14:34-15:20)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sick are healed by just touching Jesus' cloak (14:34-36) • "That which defiles" (15:1-20)

Table 3-8. Jesus' teachings

Jesus' Ministry in Tyre and Sidon (Mt 15:21-28)	
1	Casts out demon from the Canaanite woman's daughter (Mt 15:21-28)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus' love for Gentiles

Table 3-9. Jesus Ministry in Tyre and Sidon

(4) Jesus' Ministry in Tyre and Sidon

Another very important thing that Jesus wanted to teach His disciples on was cross-cultural missions (or Gentile missions). For this purpose, Jesus used the region of Tyre and Sidon (a city in the

present-day Lebanon) as a teaching tool. During the time of Jesus, many people from Tyre and Sidon visited Capernaum to follow Jesus around. Although these people were Gentiles, Jesus loved them more than His fellow Galileans. The reason was that the people of Tyre and Sidon opened their hearts and accepted Jesus, whereas the people of Galilee did not open their hearts to Him despite Jesus' having performed so many miracles there (Mt 11:20-24).

For this reason, Jesus often criticized Galileans (Mt 10:15; 11:20-24). "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you" (Mt 11:21-22). Here, Jesus plainly says that the cities of Galilee, where Jesus focused His ministry, were far less receptive to Him than the Gentile city of Tyre and Sidon.

Then one day, Jesus personally visited Tyre and Sidon. There, He healed the daughter of a Canaanite woman. He praised the woman for her great faith (Mt 15:21-28) right in front of His disciples (who looked down on Gentiles). This was to train His disciples to have more positive attitude toward Gentiles, to shift their whole mindset concerning Gentiles. This was necessary because Jesus had pre-destined His disciples to become missionaries to the Gentiles of Samaria, Syria, Turkey, Greece, Africa, and the rest of the Roman Empire.

Map 3-2. The regions of Israel



(5) Jesus' Ministry Back in Galilee

After Jesus returned to Galilee from Tyre and Sidon, He continued to teach His disciples about His own identity: He taught them through His healing miracles (Mt 15:29-31), the miracle of 'Seven Loaves and Two Fish' (Mt 15:32-39), the Sign of Jonah (16:1-12), Peter's declaration (Mt 16:13-20), prediction of His upcoming death and resurrection (Mt 16:21-28), etc.

Among the events demonstrating Jesus' identity, there was a particularly notable event which occurred on a mountain, the Transfiguration. Here, Jesus took three of His disciples, Peter, James, and John, with him up to the Third Heaven (Paradise) (2 Cor 12:2-4), where His appearance was transformed to be white as light. He even spoke with Moses and Elijah. And the voice of God the Father was heard saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" So God the Father personally testified as to Jesus' identity. This event is recorded in all the Synoptic Gospels (Mt 17:1-13; Mk 9:2-13; Lk 9:28-36). It was an event so extraordinary that Peter even mentioned it decades later in his second epistle (2 Pet 1:17-18).

Jesus' Ministry Back in Galilee (Mt 15:29-18:35)	
1	Healing ministry (15:29-31)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus heals the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute
2	The miracle of "Seven Loaves and Two Fish" (15:32-39)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus feeds four-thousand with seven loaves and two fish (15:38) • Seven baskets of left-over pieces (15:37)
3	The Sign of Jonah (16:1-12)
4	Peter's declaration (16:13-20)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus is the Son of the Living God! • Jesus is the Messiah!
5	Jesus predicts His death and resurrection for the first time (16:21-28)
6	The Transfiguration (17:1-13)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus takes Peter, James, and John with Him (17:1) • "This is my Son, whom I love" (17:5)
7	Faith as small as a mustard seed (17:14-21)
8	Jesus predicts His death and resurrection for the second time (17:22-23)
9	Miracle of the "coin in the fish's mouth" (17:24-27)
10	Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven (18:1-35)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One who takes the lowly position of a child (18:1-5) • Things that cause one to stumble (18:6-11) • The ninety-nine sheep and one lost sheep (18:12-14) • Forgive your brother seventy-seven times (18:15-35)

Table 3-10. Jesus' Ministry back in Galilee

(6) Jesus' Ministry in Judea

By this point, Jesus' three-year public ministry was nearing its end. Now, Jesus had to head for Mount Moriah in Jerusalem (Gen 22:2) in order to accomplish His atoning death on the cross (1 Cor 2:7; Rom 16:25-26; Eph 1:3-14; 1 Pet 1:19-20; 2 Tim 1:9), as had been planned before the creation of the world. On His way to Jerusalem, Jesus fellowshiped with the children of God in Judea. Jesus taught them that He must enter Jerusalem as the Passover lamb and become the atoning sacrifice (for the sins of the world).

Jesus' Ministry in Judea (Mt 19:1-20:34)	
1	Debate concerning marriage and divorce (19:1-12)
2	Jesus blesses little children (19:13-15)
3	The rich young man (19:16-30)
4	Parable of the vineyard workers (20:1-16)
5	Jesus predicts His death and resurrection for the third time (20:17-19)
6	Lesson on serving (20:20-28)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve"• "And to give His life as a ransom for many"
7	Jesus heals two blind men at Jericho (20:29-34)

Table 3-11. Jesus' Ministry in Judea

(7) Jesus' Passion Week

'Jesus' Passion Week' refers to the one week starting from Jesus' entry into Jerusalem to Jesus' death on the cross at Golgotha. This week coincides with the first three festivals of the Jewish religious calendar: the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of First Fruits.

According to the Jewish holy calendar, the Passover is on the 15th day of the 1st month, the Feast of Unleavened Bread lasts from the 15th to the 22nd, and the Feast of First Fruits is on the 17th of the 1st month (Lev 23:4-14).

Note that Jews have a unique time system of their own. For Jews, the beginning of each day is at 6 PM - their day ends at 6 PM the following day (Gen 1:5). In Leviticus 23:5 it says that "Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month". So, Passover actually starts at 6 PM on the fourteenth and ends at 6 PM on the fifteenth. (See Table 3-5)

In the Four Gospels, time is often reckoned using the Jewish time system, especially with regard to the festivals that occur during Jesus' Passion Week. This is important because when we analyze Passion Week in the light of the Jewish time system, we realize that the substance of all the Old Testament statutes (and festivals) was Jesus. Jesus personally became the Passover lamb (1 Pet 1:19). He was arrested and died on the very day of the Passover (15th day of the 1st month). And He became the first fruit of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:20) on the Feast of First Fruits (the 17th day of the 1st month).

Matthew's coverage of Passion Week (chapters 21-27) begins

with the scene of Jesus entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The day He entered Jerusalem was the 10th day of the 1st month in the Jewish Holy Calendar. This was the day when Jews typically acquired lambs in preparation for the Passover (Ex 12:3). Thus, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on this day symbolized that He was the lamb of Passover chosen to be sacrificed in Jerusalem.

Now, the Passover lamb had to be a year-old male lamb without blemish, and it had to be inspected for four days (Ex 12:3-5). In the same way, Jesus spent four days in Jerusalem after His entry there, and He was confirmed to be without sin (Mt 27:4, 19, 24; Mk 14:55; Lk 23:40, 47-48). During these four days, Jesus gave His disciples the last precious teachings, including the Olivet Discourse (Mt 21:23-25:46).

On Thursday evening, He ate His Last Supper with His disciples. Afterwards, He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. Then, He was arrested, tried, taken to Golgotha, and nailed to the cross. Jesus died on Friday of Passion Week.

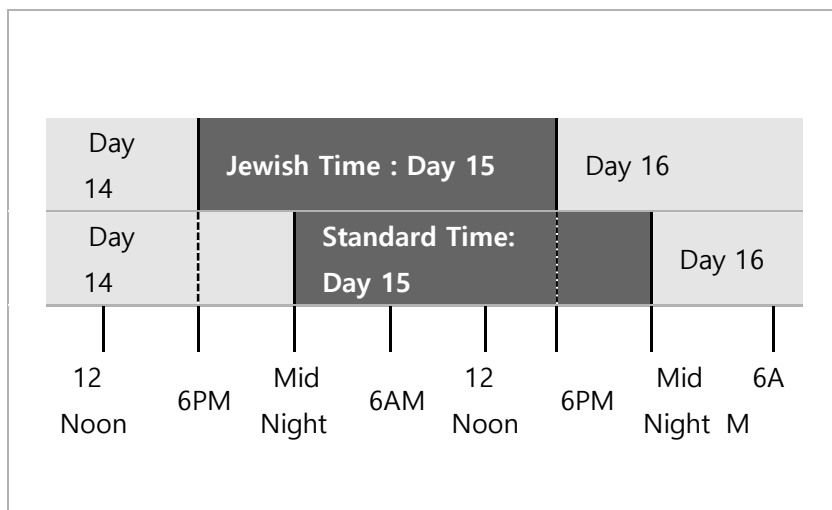


Table 3-12. The Jewish Day

Jesus' Passion Week (Mt 21:1-27:66)	
1	Palm Sunday (21:1-17)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem
2	Monday (21:18-22)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus curses a fig tree
3	Tuesday, twelve lessons (21:23-25:46)
	① Jesus' authority questioned (21:23-27)
	② Parable of the Two Sons (21:28-32)
	③ Parable of the Wicked Tenants (21:33-46)
	④ Parable of the Wedding Banquet (22:1-14)
	⑤ "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (22:15-22)

	⑥ Debate concerning the resurrection (22:23-33)
	⑦ The Great Commandment (22:34-40) : vertical commandment, horizontal commandment
	⑧ The relationship between Jesus Christ and David (22:41-46)
	⑨ Jesus Christ the only lord (23:1-12)
	⑩ "Seven woes" on the teachers of the law and Pharisees (23:13-36)
	⑪ Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple and the emergence of Messianic Jews (23:37-24:2)
	⑫ The Olivet Discourse (24:3-25:46) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of the End Times (24:3-35) • Seven parables about the Rapture (24:36-25:46) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> : The days of Noah (24:37-39), Two men working in the field (24:40), Two women grinding at the mill (24:41), The faithful and wise servant (24:45-51), Ten virgins (25:1-13), The talents (25:14-30), The sheep and the goats (25:31-46)
4	Wednesday, Preparations for Jesus' Death (26:1-16)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woman anoints Jesus' head with perfume at the house of Simon the Leper in Bethany (26:6-13) • Judas Iscariot agrees to hand over Jesus to the chief priest (26:14-16)
5	Thursday, The Last Supper (26:17-35)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Disciples prepare for Passover • (The Jewish Day starts at sunset) At sunset on Thursday, it was Passover • Jesus predicts His betrayal by Judas Iscariot (26:21-25) • The Communion: Jesus' body and blood (26:26-30) • Jesus predicts Peter's three denials (26:31-35)
6	Jesus Prays at Gethsemane (26:36-46)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes Peter, James, and John with Him (26:37) • Jesus prays three times (26:39, 42, 44)
7	Friday, Jesus' Arrest and Suffering (26:47-27:31)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (at around 12 AM) Jesus is arrested (26:47-56) • (at around 3 AM) Jesus is humiliated in the courtyard of Caiaphas the high priest (26:57-68) • Peter disowns Jesus three times (26:69-75) • Judas Iscariot commits suicide (27:3-10) • At dawn, Jesus is tried before Governor Pilate and flogged (27:11-26) • The governor's soldiers mock Jesus (27:27-31)
8	Jesus is taken to Golgotha (27:32-34)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simon of Cyrene carries the cross for Jesus • Via Dolorosa: the path Jesus walked on His way to His crucifixion • Via (way) + Dolorosa (painful, sorrowful) : "Way of Suffering", "Way of the Cross"
9	Jesus dies on the cross (27:35-27:56)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At 9 AM, Jesus is nailed to the cross (27:35) • Passersby insult Jesus (27:39-40) • Chief priests, teachers of the law, and elders mock Jesus (27:41-43) • At noon, darkness falls over all the land (27:45) • At 3 PM, Jesus dies (27:46-50) • The curtain of the temple is torn in two pieces (27:51)
10	Jesus is buried (27:57-66)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, takes Jesus' body and places it in a new tomb (27:57-61) • At sunset, it was the day after Preparation Day, the Sabbath

Table 3-13. Jesus' Passion Week

(8) Jesus' Resurrection and Great Commission

Jesus resurrected three days after dying on the cross. Matthew testified to Jesus' resurrection through the accounts of those who witnessed the resurrected Lord firsthand. After His resurrection, Jesus personally paid a visit to His disciples, who had gone back to their homes and fishing, and gave them the Great Commission. This is how the Gospel of Matthew ends.

Though Jesus spent 40 days on earth after His resurrection, Matthew simply sums it up with the Great Commission. Matthew concludes his Gospel with the Great Commission in order to emphasize to the Jewish Christians steeped in ethnocentrism the absolute/obvious necessity of Gentile missions.

As for Matthew himself, he died a missionary to Ethiopia. He became "a kernel of wheat that fell to the ground and died" so that many Gentiles could receive life in Jesus (Jn 12:24).

Jesus' Resurrection and the Great Commission (Mt 28:1-20)	
	Sunday, Jesus' resurrection (28:6)
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a violent earthquake (27:51; 28:2) • Many Old Testament saints are resurrected (27:52-53)
	The Empty Tomb (28:1-15)
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dawn after the Sabbath, Feast of First Fruits • Two women visit Jesus' tomb (28:1) • An angel appears and announces Jesus' resurrection (28:2-7) • Jesus meets the women and speaks to them (28:8-10) • Guards report everything to the chief priests (28:11-15)
	Jesus appears to the disciples in Galilee (28:16-17)
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The disciples worship Jesus (28:17) • But some disciples still doubt Jesus' resurrection (28:17)
	Jesus gives the Great Commission (28:18-20)
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus has all authority in heaven and earth (8:19) • Jesus commands His disciples to make disciples of all nations (28:19) • He promises to be with the disciples until the very end (28:20)

Table 3-14. Resurrection of Jesus

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CHAPTER 4

The Gospel of Luke

I. Background of the Book of Luke

The Gospel of Luke was written in between 60 and 62 AD. It was the second Gospel to be written, ten years after the Gospel of Matthew (50~52 AD). The author, Luke, was converted to Christianity by Paul at Antioch in 50 AD. Luke then started accompanying Paul on his missionary journeys, starting from Paul's second missionary journey (50-52 AD) (Acts 16:10, "we"). Then after Paul's third missionary journey (53-57 AD), when Paul was under house arrest in Rome from 60 to 62 AD, Luke remained by Paul's side the whole time (Acts 28:16, "we"). During this time, Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke, his first book.

In order to understand the Gospel of Luke, it is important to have an accurate understanding of the historical setting in which it was written. For this purpose, we need to look at the New Testament texts which were written before the Gospel of Luke.

1. Books Written Before Luke

On his second missionary journey (50~52 AD, Acts 15:36-18:22), Apostle Paul embarked from the Church of Antioch and travelled to Asia (the region of Asia Minor, western part of present-day Turkey). In Asia, Paul founded seven churches: the Church of Ephesus, the

Church of Smyrna, the Church of Pergamum, the Church of Thyatira, the Church of Sardis, the Church of Philadelphia, and the Church of Laodicea (Rev 2:1-3:22). He also founded the Church of Colossae (Col 1:1). These are all famous churches whose names ring familiar to us. After founding these churches, Paul went over from Asia to Macedonia (Acts 16:11-12). But just how he wound up doing so is very interesting.

Now, Macedonia was a gateway to Europe. But originally, Paul had had no intention of going to Macedonia or Europe. After arriving in Mysia, the border region between Europe and Asia, Paul had originally planned to turn back inland, eastward toward Bythia. However, the Holy Spirit did not allow him to do so (Acts 16:7). Not only that, Paul even had a vision in the night in which a man from Macedonia appeared and beseeched him to come to Macedonia to help his people (Acts 16:9, "Macedonian Vision"). So taking this vision as a sign from God, Paul and his team crossed over to Macedonia, a region located north of Greece. This was a watershed moment when the Gospel first made its way into Europe.

(1) First and Second Thessalonians (51 AD)

After entering Macedonia, Paul founded the first church in Europe in Philippi (Acts 16:12). At the time, Philippi was the second largest city in Macedonia after Thessaloniki. It was also the gateway city between Europe and Asia. Therefore, it was an important jumping-off place for missions into Europe.

In Philippi, Paul met Lydia, a Diaspora Jewish woman from Thyatira who happened to be visiting the city on business, and converted her to Christianity (Acts 16:13-15). From then on, Lydia became a faithful coworker of Paul and played a central role in the establishment of the Church of Philippi (Acts 16:11-40). As for Paul, he headed south into The Greek peninsula and founded the churches of Thessaloniki (Acts 17:1-9) and Corinth (Acts 18:1-11), one after the other.

After visiting all the major cities in Greece, Paul stayed for a while at the Church of Corinth. During this time, he began hearing complaints from the Church of Thessaloniki concerning his teachings. Jewish Christians were especially outspoken in their complaints. In order to address these complaints and also help the Christians of Thessaloniki become more spiritually mature, Paul wrote two letters to the Church of Thessaloniki. Paul wrote these letters from Corinth in 51 AD, during his second missionary journey.

First and Second Thessalonians both books can be categorized as 'pastoral epistles'. However, a small amount of theological issues are also discussed in these books. For example, 1st Thessalonians mentions Jesus' resurrection and second coming (1 Thes. chapters 4-5). 2nd Thessalonians talks about the AntiChrist and the End



Map 4-1. Key Cities where Paul performed missionary work

The rest of the two epistles taught the Christians of Thessaloniki how to live out their faith within the church and within their homes. Also, Paul encouraged them to do good deeds and avoid evil, since Jesus' second coming was near at hand.

But since these two letters primarily dealt with issues that the Church of Thessaloniki specifically was facing, they were a bit lacking (at least at their time of writing) in terms of universal applicability. That is, these letters weren't 100% helpful for churches in other regions that were facing different situations and different issues.

(2) First and Second Corinthians (55 AD)

From 53 to 57 AD, Paul went on his third missionary journey. The main purpose of his third missionary journey was to revisit the churches he had established during his second missionary journey and to strengthen and encourage them (Acts 18:23). During his third journey, Paul spent two years at the School of Tyrannus in Ephesus, where he taught his disciples (Acts 19:9-20). During that time, Paul heard the news that the Church of Corinth was facing hardship due to many problems that had arisen. So, Paul wrote two letters to the Church of Corinth in 55 AD. These letters became the New Testament books of First and Second Corinthians. These were also pastoral letters. While they do discuss some theological issues, they are not full-scale theological texts.

(3) Romans (57 A.D.)

Toward the end of his third missionary journey, Paul wrote the book of Romans (in 57 AD, from Corinth). At the time, Paul had not yet been to Rome (Rom 15:22). But thirty or so of his disciples, whom he had trained at the School of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9) were ministering there. The names of these disciples are recorded in Romans 16:1-16. From Rome, these disciples appealed to Paul concerning the many problems they were running into while ministering there.

Chief among them were problems concerning theological doctrine. Since the people of Rome were very intellectual, in order to spread the Gospel to them, comprehensive doctrines covering everything from the Creation to the End Times were needed. Therefore, in the book of Romans, Paul treated some high-level theological doctrines such as the Doctrine of Salvation (chapters 1-8), Doctrine of Israel ("Israelology", chapters 9-11), and Doctrine of the Christian life (chapters 12-16). However, the thing lacking in the Book of Romans was that these doctrinal matters were not backed up by historical facts. While the Book of Romans was an amazing book on doctrine, it was not a dynamic, historical book.

(4) Paul's Prison Letters

After his third missionary journey (53~57 AD, Acts 18:23-21:16), Paul went to Jerusalem (Acts 21:17). There, he was arrested and taken to Rome (60 AD, Acts 28:16). He was under house arrest in Rome from 60~62 AD (Acts 28:30). While he was thus imprisoned, he wrote four letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and

Philemon. The first three were relatively short letters to the Churches of Ephesus, Philippi, and Colossae. These are pastoral letters with some theological doctrine. The book of Philemon is a personal letter Paul wrote to a man named Philemon, whose runaway slave Onesimus he had met in Rome. In the letter, Paul entreats Philemon to forgive and accept Onesimus when he returns to his master. So, these four prison letters of Paul are similar to Paul's earlier letters in that it is hard to consider them comprehensive, historical Christian texts.

BC	4	Jesus is born		
AD	5	Paul is born		
	26	Jesus begins public ministry		
	30	Jesus' crucifixion/ resurrection/ ascension Jerusalem church started		
	33	Jerusalem church scattered Antioch church started		
	35	Paul's conversion		
	45	Paul arrives at Antioch		
46~48		Paul's 1 st missionary journey	Paul's Letter	The Four Gospels...
	49	Council of Jerusalem (Ac 15:1-35)	Galatians	James
50~52		Paul's 2 nd mission journey Luke's conversion (Ac 16:10)	1,2 Thessalon	Matthew
53~57		Paul's 3 rd missionary journey	1,2 Corin, Rom	
60~62		Paul's 1 st imprisonment	Ephes, Philipp, Coloss, Philem	Luke
	63	Paul's 4 th missionary journey	1 Tim, Titus	Acts
	66			Mark
	67	Paul's 2 nd imprisonment	2 Timothy	
	68	Paul martyred		
	70	Fall of Israel Jerusalem temple destroyed		John

Table 4-1. Time period when Paul's Letters and the Four Gospels were written

2. Purpose of the Gospel of Luke

(1) A Book Written for Gentiles

As the Gospel began to be preached in Rome, there came an urgent need for a comprehensive Christian text that was historical, systematic, and written in a way that Gentiles could easily understand. As a result of the diligent work of Paul and others to evangelize the Gentiles, many Gentiles had come into the Christian community. But as we have seen, there was of yet no text which was written specifically for the Gentile readership and which offered a historical perspective. There was the Gospel of Matthew, which had been written 10 years previously. But this was a Gospel written for Jewish Christians - all the expressions, vocabulary, and traditions contained in it were difficult for Gentiles to understand.

Up until this point, since Christianity had started among Jews, Jewish Christians still had all the power and influence in the church. The top Christian leaders, as well, were all Jews (James, Peter, Paul, and Barnabas). As a result, Gentile Christians found it difficult to enter into mainstream Christian society, and they felt left out. Not only that, all the books on Christian doctrine to date had been written by Jews, and the content of the books mostly concerned Jews as well. So Gentile Christians could not but feel uncomfortable in this situation. Clearly, the time had arrived for a Christian text written by a Gentile, from the Gentile perspective, for Gentile Christians. This is why God prepared Luke to write the Gospel of Luke (60~62 AD, from Rome).

(2) The Proliferation of Heresies

Between 30 and 60 AD, many heresies emerged within the Christian community. As Christianity spread, so did heresies also expand and spread in all directions like yeast. Some denied Jesus' divinity; others denied Jesus' humanity. Some denied Jesus' resurrection. Some denied Jesus' historicity. (The latter means that they denied Jesus actually existed in history; for them, Jesus was only an imaginary character. This would mean that Jesus never came into human history: He never became human; He never walked the earth with us.) And there were other heresies as well, such as those that denied the Jesus' virgin birth, or those that denied Jesus' ascension into heaven.

From Jerusalem to Rome, many churches and Christians were exposed to such heresies. As a result, the Church was confused, and it had no answers as to what to do about these heresies. This was because at the time there was an absolute shortage of materials that could be employed to counter these heretical teachings.

Of course, Paul's epistles and the Book of Romans contained warnings about false teachings. First and Second Corinthians, First and Second Thessalonians, Galatians, and the Book of James all dealt with the problem of heresy. They all provided good ammunition to fight against heretical teachings. However, they were lacking because they could not serve as actual historical evidence of Jesus. They were not comprehensive, historical Christian texts which were so needed at the time.

In this setting, Jesus led Luke to write two books: the Gospel of

Luke and the Book of Acts. The first book, the Gospel of Luke, was written at roughly the same time as Paul's prison epistles (60~62 AD). As soon as he finished his Gospel, Luke wrote the Book of Acts in 63 AD. Both of these books are historical books. The Gospel of Luke is a biography of Jesus covering the years from 4 BC, when Jesus was born, to 30 AD, when Jesus died on the cross, resurrected, and ascended up to heaven. The 'Acts of the Apostles' (Book of Acts) covers the missions history of the early Christians, from Jesus' ascension in 30 AD to Paul's first imprisonment in Rome in 60 AD. The establishment of the Church of Jerusalem and the Church of Antioch, as well as Paul's three missionary journeys are among the things which are covered in this thirty-year history of early Christian missionary work.

II. The Author and the Recipient of the Book of Luke

Luke is the sole Gentile among the authors of the Four Gospels. Matthew, Mark, and John were all Jews. As for Paul, the most prolific of the New Testament authors, he introduces himself as the "Hebrew of Hebrews" (Phil 3:5). In fact, Luke is almost the only Gentile writer in the entire Bible. Therefore, Luke, from God's point of view, must have been a very special person. Let's now look closely at what kind of person Luke was, and also find out who Theophilus (the one to whom Luke addressed his Gospel) was.

1. Who was Luke?

Luke was a doctor from Antioch, Syria (Col 4:14). He was also a historian with a wide knowledge. Having been well educated in the Greek cultural environment, he was literate in Greek, highly intelligent, and able to think logically and comprehensively. On top of this, he was a Gentile. So, he was able to re-illuminate early Christian history (in which Jews had played the central role) from the Gentile point of view, and he was able to teach it to both Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians alike.

Luke joined Paul in 50 AD, at the time of Paul's second missionary journey. Acts 16:8-10 says, "So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

Up to this point in the Book of Acts, the subject pronoun used was always "they". But from this point, the subject becomes, "we." This signifies that right at this time, Luke, having converted to Christianity, joined Paul on his second missionary journey. From the time Paul crosses over into Europe in obedience to his Macedonia Vision, all the stories in the Book of Acts are written in the first-person, i.e. using the subject pronoun "we". So from 50 AD, Luke took on the important role of following Paul on his journeys, witnessing the work of missions firsthand, and recording everything he saw.

	Fact about Luke	Description
1	Hometown	Antioch, Syria
2	Occupation	Doctor (Col 4:14), historian
3	Level of Education	Received high-level Greek education
4	Character	Logical, historically minded, objective, even-handed
5	Time of conversion	Around 50 AD (Acts 16:10, "God called <i>us</i> ..")
6	Converted by	Apostle Paul
7	Relationship to Paul	Fellow worker (Philem 1:24), Remained by Paul's side until Paul's martyrdom (2 Tim 4:11)
8	Books he wrote	Luke, Acts
9	Mission Field	Rome
10	Martyrdom	AD 91, Rome, death by hanging

Table 4-2. Facts about Luke

Luke worked with Paul all the way until Paul was martyred. In fact, Paul had two sincere coworkers who stayed by his side till the very end. One was Timothy, and the other was Luke. That is why Paul called Timothy his "spiritual son" (1 Tim 1:2), and Luke his "dear friend and co-worker" (Col 4:14; Philem 1:24). Paul considered Luke his friend and respected him. He in fact treated Luke as an equal; this is probably because the two men were similar in many ways including age, level of education, qualifications, position in society, being from an elite class, having a good family background, etc. When Paul was imprisoned in Rome, most of his followers deserted him. But Luke remained by Paul's side until the end (2 Tim 4:9-11). So Luke, a pure Gentile, was Paul's steadfast co-worker for 18 years, from 50 AD to 68 AD when Paul was martyred, and he was a witness to all of Paul's missions ministries.

Luke lived 23 more years after Paul's martyrdom in 68 AD. He was used by God for the very important task of evangelizing the Roman Empire. In the end, he was martyred by hanging (91 AD). Thus, he too gave glory to the Triune God by becoming "a kernel of wheat that died" for the salvation of many (Jn 12:24).

2. Luke's Two History Books

Luke wrote two books, the Gospel of Luke (60~62 AD) and the Book of Acts (63 AD). Since Luke was a historian as well as a doctor, his writings clearly reflect the perspective and writing style of a historian. For instance, when relating events, he tries to be as chronological as possible, and he also tries to connect the historical events in his books to relevant current events at his time of writing.

At the time he was writing his Gospel, Luke was in Rome with Paul. Therefore, Luke had the job of convincing Roman nobility, intellectuals, and other diverse Gentiles in Rome that everything about Jesus, including His identity and deeds, was true, and he had to do so in a logical fashion. Luke, an objective Greek-educated Gentile and a historian, was just the right person for this task.

Luke's first book, the Gospel of Luke, records events from 4 BC to 30 AD. In its 24 chapters, it records all the stories about Jesus including the prophecy concerning John the Baptist, prophecies concerning Jesus' birth and ministry, Jesus' childhood, Jesus' public ministry, and Jesus' death on the cross, resurrection, and ascension into heaven.

The interesting thing about the Gospel of Luke is that, befitting a book written by a historian, it is relatively more detailed in its coverage of Jesus' life before the start of His public ministry. The entire chapter 1 is devoted to describing the circumstances of the births of Jesus and John the Baptist. It talks about the prophesy of the birth of John the Baptist, the fact that the mother of John the Baptist and the mother of Jesus were relatives, the connection between the birth of John the Baptist and the birth of Jesus, and John the Baptist's childhood. Then in chapter two, it records Jesus's birth, the worship of baby Jesus by the shepherds, Jesus' circumcision, and Jesus' childhood.

The Gospel of Luke is unique among the Four Gospels in recording such biographical details about Jesus. Shortly after finishing his Gospel, Luke wrote his second historical book, the Book of Acts. In Acts, Luke recorded events between 30 AD to 62 AD, including the establishment of the Church of Jerusalem and the Church of Antioch, Paul's first missionary journey (46~48 AD), Paul's second missionary journey (50~52 AD), Paul's third missionary journey (53~57 AD), and Paul's first imprisonment (60~62 AD).

Unfortunately, Luke's account ends in 62 AD with Paul's first imprisonment. He did not record events from 63 AD on. Therefore, in order to learn about Paul's fourth missionary journey (63~67 AD), we need to look at Paul's letters - namely, his 1st letter to Timothy (64 AD), his letter to Titus (65 AD), and his 2nd letter to Timothy (66 AD).

3. Why God Chose Luke

(1) Paul's Limitations

So Jesus had Luke write two history books. But out of many characters in the Bible, why did Jesus choose Luke? If there was another person who could have written these texts, it was Paul. However, Jesus did not choose Paul. This was due to Paul's own human limitations and weaknesses.

At the time, Paul's relationship with Jesus' twelve disciples was rather strained. Before his conversion, Paul had persecuted Christians (Acts 7:54-8:3). Also, Paul was from a much higher social class than the 12 disciples (Phil 3:4-6). So in many ways, Paul made the disciples uncomfortable. And as for Paul himself, he too had a less than positive impression of the 12 disciples because of the alienation and apathy he'd received from them.

In fact, when we read Paul's epistles, we can sometimes detect a subtle tension between Paul and the 12 disciples (Acts 9:1-31; 15:1-21; Gal 1:15-2:14). So, the nature of the relationship between Paul and the 12 disciples could definitely have proved a hindrance to maintaining objectivity had Paul written these two books. There was a possibility that Paul could have written about the twelve disciples who accompanied Jesus (in the Gospel) and Peter's ministry (in the Book of Acts) from a skewed point of view.

Of course, all of Scripture is written by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But the purity of the Word could have been undermined by the limitations of the writer's character and the

presence any “bitter roots” in him. Since God could not allow this, He chose Luke instead of Paul to write these two history books.

Luke was suited in many ways for the task of writing his books from a historical point of view. Luke was a highly educated researcher, analyst, and investigator. He was an objective writer. On top of this, having accompanied Paul for ten years (50~60 AD) on his second and third missionary journeys, Luke had accrued much experience in cross-cultural missions. So Luke was able to record early Christian history not only with an objective and logical viewpoint, but also with a clear missions mindset.

(2) Luke’s Balanced Point of View

Luke was a very objective person. He always tried to view and treat individuals fairly, without being biased. For example, in the Book of Acts, Luke devotes roughly equal attention to Peter and Paul. The first part of the Book of Acts (Acts 1:1-11:18) is about Peter, and the rest of the book (Acts 11:19-28:31) is about Paul. So the first 11 chapters are devoted to Peter, and the last 17 are devoted to Paul.

But in reality, Luke had a much closer relationship to Paul than Peter. After all, it was Paul who had introduced Luke to the Gospel, and Luke was Paul’s long time disciple. By the time Luke wrote his Gospel, he had already been traveling with Paul for ten years. Therefore, Luke knew Paul very well in aspect of missions.

Not only that, from a cultural standpoint as well, Luke had much more in common with Paul than Peter. Both Luke and Paul spoke Greek. Both were cosmopolitan and well-traveled. Also, both were

highly educated. These many commonalities allowed the two of them to get along well. So in this situation, one could expect Luke to have been biased in favor of Paul over Peter. But he was not. He kept an objective stance and strived to write about these two top Christian leaders of the time in a fair, balanced manner.

In his books, Luke even mentioned problems concerning Peter and Paul that other New Testament authors hesitated to point out publicly. So he was quite bold in this regard. Luke frankly brought to light the strained and uncomfortable relationship that had developed between Paul and the leaders of the Jerusalem Church (Acts chapter 15). He pointed out Peter's weaknesses and limitations (Acts 10:1-11:18). As for Paul, Luke wrote in detail just how bad Paul had been to Christians before his conversion (Acts 8:1-3). Luke even boldly wrote about the big dispute Paul and Barnabas had over Mark (Acts 15:36-41). In some ways, it could have been a virtue of sorts not to write so frankly about the weaknesses of Jesus' disciples and other top Christian leaders of the time. But Luke honestly enumerates both the disciples' strong and weak points, both their merits and shortcomings. Here he shows the prerequisite characteristics of a well-known historian.

Luke brought to light various problems involving the Church of Jerusalem and the 12 disciples at the time (Acts 6:1-16). For instance, the 12 disciples were biased in favor of Hebraic Jews (Hebrew speaking Jews) and discriminated against Diaspora Jews (Greek speaking Jews) within the church. Also, the leaders of the Jerusalem Church were reluctant to obey the Great Commission. Luke reveals how Peter disobeyed the Lord's command to him to eat the foods of the Gentiles (Acts 10:9-16). He also describes how

Peter was not exactly thrilled at the baptism of the Holy Spirit coming upon the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius. He points out that the leaders of the Jerusalem Church were uninterested in the evangelization of Gentiles (Acts 10:34-48). In stark contrast, he describes the Church of Antioch as a church devoted to and active in Gentile missions (Acts 13:1-3).

In the end, Luke was uniquely positioned to view every event objectively. He became a Christian circa 50 AD, fully twenty years after the 12 disciples came to believe in Jesus. Thus, there was no way Luke could have gotten into the inner power circle of the then Christian community, i.e. the circle of the 12 disciples. Thus, he had no reason to be an advocate for the twelve disciples. And being a Gentile, he was able to view all the historical events involving the Jewish Christians of the Early Church not from a subjective point of view, but from a third-person, unbiased point of view.

But still, why would the Holy Spirit have Luke expose the frailties of 12 disciples of Jesus so plainly?

It was to show us that we become true disciples (who understand and obey God's will) not by our "righteous acts" (Isa 64:6), but by our graciously having been chosen by God from even before the creation of the world (Eph 1:1-6).

4. The Recipient of Luke's Writings

There is something interesting about the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. Both books are addressed to someone named Theophilus. The name Theophilus appears in both Luke chapter 1

and Acts chapter 1. In both, he is referred to by Luke as "the most excellent Theophilus". The honorary title "most excellent" was at the time reserved for kings or other very high ranking government officials.

Luke 1:1-4 says, "Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught." And Acts 1:1-2 says, "In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day He was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles He had chosen."

Now, there are two theories as to who this Theophilus might have been. According to one theory, Theophilus was not an actual person, but rather a symbol. The justification for this is that the name Theophilus literally means "God's beloved friend". So it must have been just a symbolic name referring to Christians.

The first part of the name, '*Theo*,' means God. The second part of the name, '*philus*,' is related to the word "*phileo*," which means "love." There are four different words for "love" in the Greek language. They are *phileo*, *stolke*, *eros*, and *agape*. (Table 4-3) *Phileo* in particular refers to love for a friend. So the word *theophilus* would mean "a friend whom God loves." However, this theory is not too convincing compared to the second theory.

The second theory sees Theophilus as an actual person who

really existed. The reason is that Luke used the honorary title, "most excellent," before the name Theophilus. This implies that Theophilus was not just a specific individual, but a high ranking government official or general officer of sorts. This theory is more convincing than the previous theory. It is likely that Theophilus was a high-class Roman who was well educated and an intellectual. Apparently, Luke had led him to Christ. And he wanted to learn the foundational tenets of Christianity. He also wanted to know historical details such as when and where Jesus was born, as well as ascertains the veracity of all the events that happened around Jesus.

	Love	Meaning
1	Agape	God's unconditional love
2	stolke	Love between family members
3	eros	Romantic love
4	Phileo	Brotherly love between friends

Table 4-3. Four words used for "love" in the Greek language

From Luke's standpoint, Theophilus was a very important person in terms of missions strategy. Being a high ranking government official, Theophilus must have been very influential, both in terms of politics and wealth. If someone such as Theophilus were to understand the Gospel clearly and devote himself to missions, it would have been a big help to Luke and Paul. Through Theophilus' influence, connections, and wealth, the spread of the Gospel could have been much facilitated. And the Gospel texts could have been distributed throughout the entire Roman Empire. So, all these factors could have motivated Luke to write his Gospel.

	Luke	Acts
Content	Jesus' birth ~ ascension (4 BC~30 AD)	Jesus' ascension ~ Paul's 1 st imprisonment (30~62 AD)
Time of Writing	60~62 AD (the time of Paul's 1 st imprisonment)	63 AD
Place of Writing	Rome	Rome
Recipient	Theophilus	Theophilus
Theme	Historical theological Textbook	History of the birth and development of the Early Church

Table 4-4. The two books Luke wrote

III. The Gospel of Luke: Characteristics

The Gospel of Luke varies from the other three Gospels in many ways. Table 4-5 shows the six ways in which the Gospel of Luke is different.

1. From the Beginning, in Detail, in Order

The Gospel of Luke is a history book. It deals with history from 4 BC, when Jesus was born, to 30 AD when Jesus ascended to heaven. Luke was converted to Christianity in 50 AD through Paul. So, he had never met Jesus personally or followed Him around like the 12 disciples.

How the Gospel of Luke is Different	
1	From the beginning, Careful, Orderly
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After carefully investigating and examining accounts from the beginning, Luke re-arranged events in chronological order • "dynamic historicity"
2	Comprehensive theological text
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evangelistic and missions-minded (Lk 19:10) • Emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit • Doctrine of discipleship (Lk 9:57-62; 14:25-35)
3	Perspective of Jesus
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasizes Jesus' humanity: "the Son of Man", Jesus' genealogy • The Book of Luke devotes relatively less time to Passion Week (just 21% of the chapters)
4	Emphasizes Social Gospel
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern for the underprivileged/neglected class • Emphasizes the role of women
5	Events and parables that were only recorded in Luke
6	Unique narrative technique

Table 4-5. How the Book of Luke is different from the other three Gospels

For this reason, in order to write his Gospel, Luke had to rely on existing material and the eyewitness accounts of those who had seen Jesus firsthand. Thorough research and analysis were keys. He then arranged all the events chronologically, i.e. in a historical manner. Indeed, this manner of writing is evident in both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. See Luke 1:1-3, Luke 24:50-51, and Acts 1:1-3.

First, let's look at Luke 1:1-3. It says, "¹Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ²just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus..."

It is evident from this passage that even before Luke, there had been many writers who tried to write about the life, ministry, and teachings of Jesus. But as yet, there was no comprehensive text on the matter; the existing ones were short independent ones about individual events and stories, and they were not chronologically linked in any way. Thus, Luke had felt a need to compile all these stories into one book and arrange everything in chronological order.

In verse 3, it says, "With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus." Luke was moved and led by the Holy Spirit to investigate all the extant texts, interview all the eyewitnesses, investigate whether each event was real or not, and carefully determine when, where, and how each event occurred. Luke 1:1-3 is evidence that the writer Luke truly had the eye of a researcher and a historian.

Also, in Luke 24:50-51, it says, "When He had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into heaven." This is how the Gospel of Luke ends. (Out of the Four Gospels, only the Gospel of Luke and Mark end with Jesus' ascension.)

Notably, this ending of the Gospel of Luke exactly coincides with the beginning of the Book of Acts. The two history books overlap at this juncture, and connect seamlessly. In Acts 1:1, it says, "In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day He was taken up to heaven ..." This verse is the link Luke uses to connect the Book of Acts to the Gospel of Luke; it's the "bridge" between the two books.

Luke was able to write like this because he was a well-qualified historian. He had received a high-level education, and he was able to think logically and objectively. Fluent in Greek, he had been able to learn advanced scholarly subjects, and he projected a Hellenistic perspective in his writings. In addition, since he was a doctor by occupation, he was able to think in a meticulous scientific manner. Luke had a thorough, diligent, and investigative personality. Thus, he was well equipped to gather all the materials for his books and analyze them. But above all, the Holy Spirit aided Luke in his task by anointing him with spiritual insight, because even for someone with Luke's background, without the calling and anointing of Jesus himself, it would not have been possible to write such texts.

The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts were well received by both Jewish and Gentile Christians of the time. Luke's writings are full of historical elements such as historical background, historical motive, historical situation, chronological order, and historical realism. This allows the readers to feel alive at the scene in the stories.

Luke's books have come to be used by Christians as textbooks and reference books. The movie- "Jesus" which is being used as

worldwide evangelical tool till today, based on the Gospel of Luke. To this day, when Christians are reading the New Testament epistles and are uncertain about when a particular event happened, or what the background setting of the event was, they must refer to the Gospel of Luke or Acts. It is not possible to fully understand the epistles without reading the Luke's two history books. Even today, these two books help Christians better understand the Bible. They are invaluable books that provide a lively understanding of the Word of God.

2. Comprehensive Theological Text

The Gospel of Luke is a comprehensive Christian theological text. Comprehensive means "all in one". All the important theological doctrines of Christianity are contained in the Gospel of Luke. (Table 4-6)

Compared to the other Gospels, Luke particularly emphasizes the doctrines of Pneumatology, Discipleship, and Missiology. Because Luke himself had worked together with Paul in the mission fields, he had much experience to draw from in these three areas. He had seen the work of the Holy Spirit up close, and he was also well-acquainted with how missions and discipleship worked in real life. Let's look briefly at how these three doctrines are presented in Luke.

Doctrines in Book of Luke		
1	Christology	Messiah, Christ, Son of God
2	History of Christianity	Events from 4 BC to 30 AD
3	Pneumatology	Emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:15, 35, 41; 2:25-35, 4:1, 14, 18; 11:13; 24:49)
4	Discipleship	Contains parables about discipleship that are only in Book of Luke (Lk 9:57-62; 14:25-35)
5	Missiology	Strongly missions-oriented (Lk 19:10)
6	Sanctification	Sermon on the Mount (Lk 6:20-49)
7	Salvation	The sign of Jonah (Lk 11:29-32), etc.
8	Eschatology	Discourse on the Mount of Olives (Lk 12:35-48)

Table 4-6. Theological doctrines in the Book of Luke

(1) Pneumatology in Luke

Luke illuminates the ministry of the Holy Spirit in detail. (Lk 1:15, 35, 41; 2:25-35, 4:1, 14, 18; 11:13; 24:49). Let's look at a few of these verses. "...he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born" (Lk 1:15). "...Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit" (Lk 1:41). "His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied.." (Lk 1:67)

"Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon.. the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts.." (Lk 2:25-27)

"Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" (Lk 4:1). "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through the whole countryside" (Lk 4:14). "At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said.." (Lk 10:21). "I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." (Lk 24:49)

The work of the Holy Spirit is even more emphasized in Luke's second book, the Acts of the Apostles. In Acts, Luke describes the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples in Mark's upper room on the day of Pentecost, as well as detailed descriptions of all the miracles and wonders performed by God through the disciples. The reason so many stories in the Books of Luke and Acts involve the workings of the Holy Spirit is that Luke had experienced and witnessed the anointing of the Holy Spirit firsthand- Luke had a strong belief in the Holy Spirit.

(2) Discipleship in Luke

Compared to the other Gospels, the Gospel of Luke is also rather detailed in its treatment of Christian discipleship. Luke's famous doctrine of discipleship is summed up in Luke 9:57-62 and 14:25-35. His core message is that in order to become a disciple of Christ, you must make self-sacrifices. One must go to the extent of hating one's own parents, siblings, and even one's own life in order to follow Jesus. One must give up all one's possessions, and carry one's cross.

Since this is a very serious matter, he uses many parables of Jesus to explain this:

"Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." (Lk 9:61-62)

"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you.. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples." "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out.." (Lk 14:28-35)

Luke was able to boldly state these requisites for becoming the disciples of Christ, because he himself was such a disciple. Luke's words on what it means to be a disciple provided strength and encouragement to Christians at the time, who were suffering for the sake of the Gospel.

(3) Missiology in Luke

The Book of Luke emphasizes Gentile missions. Luke's core message concerning missions is found in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Other passages in Luke that show the character of Luke's missiology include the following: miracle of five loaves and two fish (Lk 9:10-17), stories promoting Samaritans (Lk 10:32-37; 17:11-19), the sending out of 70 disciples (Lk 10:1-24), and the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32).

Luke spent 18 years (50~68 AD) working in the mission field with Paul. Thus, he had abundant firsthand experience in missions, and he understood clearly that Jesus had come to earth to save the Gentiles in accordance with the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:2-3). Thus, Luke could not but write his books with the strongest missions mindset.

And not only did Luke write his two books, he also took part in the work of literary missions and endeavored to distribute Christian texts en masse wherever they were needed.

3. Luke's Perspective of Jesus

(1) Emphasis on Jesus' Humanity

The Gospel of Luke particularly emphasizes Jesus' humanity. Compared to the other Gospels, the title 'Son of Man' is used quite often in Luke. Luke does this in order to emphasize Jesus' total humanity. This is in contrast to the Gospel of John's emphasis on Jesus Christ's divinity. John puts much more weight on the fact that Jesus is the 'Son of God'.

Luke on the other hand, focuses on the fact that Jesus was a real person who existed in history. This is why Luke includes more stories concerning Jesus' birth and childhood than the other Gospels authors.

He includes the background of the birth of John the Baptist, prophecies concerning the conception and birth of Jesus, the worship given by shepherds and angels to the baby Jesus, and Jesus' discussion with the teachers at the Temple when He was 12 years old. All these details are only found in the Gospel of Luke.

Compared to the other Gospels, Luke devotes as many pages as possible to depicting the life of Jesus the human being.

(2) Luke Spends Relatively Less Time on Jesus' Passion Week

The Gospel of Luke does not allot many pages to Jesus' Passion Week (Holy Week). Jesus' Passion Week is the week starting from Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem to Jesus' resurrection. That is, it runs from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday; it is a week full of meaning. The Gospel of Matthew devotes eight whole chapters to Passion Week. (28% of the book) The Gospel of Mark devotes six chapters, or 38% of the book. The Gospel of John allots ten chapters, or 48% – almost half of the book. In comparison, the Gospel of Luke only devotes five chapters, a mere 21% of the book. Comparing the Four Gospels, it is evident that Luke contains relatively less content on Passion Week than the other three Gospels. (Table 4-7) In other Words, Luke chose to emphasize topics other than Passion Week.

	Gospel	Triumphant Entry ~ Resurrection/Ascension	No. of chapters	Percentage of book
1	Matthew	Mt 21-28	8	28%
2	Mark	Mk 11-16	6	38%
3	Luke	Lk 19:28-24:53	5	21%
4	John	Jn 12:12-21:25	10	48%

Table 4-7. Comparison of the Four Gospels' coverage of Passion Week

4. Leans toward a Social Gospel

Since the Gospel of Luke emphasizes Jesus' humanity, it has a natural tendency toward being a social gospel. Luke had a heart for people who were socially discriminated against and neglected, and he often portrayed Jesus being very loving to these weakest members of society and improving their lives whenever he had the chance. Luke's gospel is unique in its advocacy of the underprivileged/neglected classes such as the poor, widows, orphans, women in general, the blind, the crippled, and paralytics. For this reason, liberal theologians today often quote from the Gospel of Luke in order to support and justify their own skewed theological positions. But theirs is a misinterpretation of the essence of Luke's Gospel.

(1) Events and Parables Concerning the Neglected Class Found Only in the Gospel of Luke

Here is a list of events and parables concerning social issues which are only found in the Gospel of Luke (Table 4-8).

	Description	Bible passage
1	Jesus raises the dead son of the Widow of Nain	Lk 7:11-15
2	Parable of the Good Samaritan	Lk 10:30-37
3	Parable of the rich fool who stores up earthly wealth	Lk 12:13-21
4	Jesus heals a crippled woman	Lk 13:10-17
5	Jesus heals a man with dropsy	Lk 14:1-6
6	"Invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind"	Lk 14:12-14
7	Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus	Lk 16:19-31
8	Jesus heals ten lepers; only the Samaritan comes back and thanks Jesus	Lk 17:11-19
9	Parable of the Persistent Widow	Lk 18:1-8
10	Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector	Lk 18:9-14
11	Jesus shows special favor to Zacchaeus the tax collector	Lk 19:1-10
12	Parable of the Ten Minas	Lk 19:11-27

Table 4-8. Events and parables concerning the neglected class that are only recorded in the Gospel of Luke

(2) Women's Equality

The Holy Spirit teaches us through Luke that the Christian community must not discriminate against women. This is why the Gospel of Luke is mostly favorable to women. Luke shows a strong disinclination against the discrimination of women traditional to Jewish culture. He emphasizes the fact that God loves both men and women equally. This means that the Kingdom of God is not a

male-centered society, but one where men and women are equal. Hence, Luke includes in his Gospel many stories involving women, in order to show that God loves women the same as men. Let's look at a few examples.

Firstly, there is the story of the prophetess Anna. In the Old Testament, almost all the prophets were male. But when it came to Jesus' birth, God appointed a woman to prophesy it (Lk 2:36-38).

Second, regarding Jesus' genealogy, Luke chose to trace Jesus' genealogy through the line of Mary, not Joseph. Whereas Matthew chose Joseph's bloodline and described Jesus' patriarchal genealogy, Luke balanced this out by choosing Mary's bloodline (Lk 3:23-38). This was likely in an effort to show that God is equal regarding the two genders.

Third, the Gospel of Luke is unique in that it records Jesus' conversations while He was staying at the house of Mary and Martha. These two sisters are famous from the Gospel of John; they are the sisters of Lazarus, the man whom Jesus raised from the dead. But surprisingly in the Gospel of Luke, Lazarus is not even mentioned. Only Jesus' conversations with Lazarus' sisters Martha and Mary are recorded (Lk 10:38-42).

Fourth, there is the Parable of the Persistent Widow. In this parable, the widow symbolizes people of God who entreat God day and night. Jesus used this parable to teach His disciples to never stop praying and not to lose heart. But it is notable that He actually told His disciples to imitate a *lowly widow*.

Just as Jesus was unique in promoting the stature of women in the midst of the male-dominated society of the time, Luke is unique among the Gospels in having recorded this story (Lk 18:1-8).

(3) A Harmony in between Jesus' Humanity and Divinity

Compared to the other Gospels, the Gospel of Luke definitely leans strongly toward being a social gospel. That is why liberal theologians these days love to quote from Luke. However, their understanding of the Gospel of Luke is only skin deep. Liberal theologians overemphasize Jesus' humanity, and they go so far as to say that Jesus came into the world solely for the sake of the social gospel. Some liberal theologians take this too far and slowly fall into religious pluralism. They claim that Christians must not try to convert adherents of other religions, because all religions provide their own means of salvation. So, they see Christian missions simply as a means to help those in need. That is, they relegate "Christian love" to solely meeting people's physical needs. This, of course, is a very wrong conclusion.

The Christian Gospel is made whole only when Jesus' humanity becomes one with Jesus' divinity. All the events in the Bible simultaneously have a spiritual dimension as well as a physical dimension. Whenever Jesus healed people, He said that the purpose of the miracle was to show us that He is God. He wanted to be glorified as God. He did not heal people just so that those healed could enjoy life briefly on this earth. Rather, He healed them so that they could recognize His true identity, believe in Him, and enjoy eternal happiness in the hereafter.

When we read Luke, we need to keep these things in mind. While the Gospel of Luke does emphasize Jesus' humanity, there is a lot in it about Jesus' divinity as well. Jesus' Great Commission is

about bringing people from death to life. We have to understand that the real reason Jesus healed people was to save their souls. In order to save even just one soul, Jesus first met the people's physical needs. He then told them who He was - He taught them that He is God. This was the method of missions Jesus used; so it should be ours as well. Again, the goal of missions is to teach people that *Jesus is God*.

5. Content Found Only in the Gospel of Luke

The Gospel of Luke contains many parables and events that are not found in the other Gospels. In particular, the stories in the first two chapters of Luke don't appear at all in the other Gospels. We are speaking of the background information concerning the birth of Jesus. Why was Luke alone in including this material? It was because he had the eyes of a historian. The Holy Spirit gave Luke special wisdom and insight to record no less than 42 events and parables that are not recorded in the other Gospels (Table 4-9).

	Item	Bible passage
1	Introduction	Lk 1:1-4
2	Prophecy of the birth of John the Baptist	Lk 1:5-25
3	Prophecy of the birth of Jesus	Lk 1:26-56
4	The birth of John the Baptist	Lk 1:57-80
5	Historical background of Jesus' birth	Lk 2:1-7
6	The shepherds and the angels	Lk 2:8-20
7	Jesus is presented at the Temple	Lk 2:21-24
8	Simeon's prophecy	Lk 2:25-35
9	Anna's prophecy	Lk 2:36-38
10	Jesus visits temple at 12 years of age	Lk 2:41-52
11	Genealogy of Jesus, following the lineage of Mary	Lk 3:23-38
12	People try to throw Jesus off a cliff	Lk 4:28-30
13	Miraculous catch of fish	Lk 5:4-11
14	Jesus raises the son of the Widow of Nain	Lk 7:11-15
15	Parable of the Two Debtors	Lk 7:41-43
16	Jesus is rejected by a Samaritan village	Lk 9:51-56
17	Jesus sends out 70 disciples	Lk 10:1-24
18	Parable of the Good Samaritan	Lk 10:30-37
19	Jesus visits the home of Martha and Mary in Bethany	Lk 10:38-42
20	Parable of a Friend in Need	Lk 11:5-8
21	Parable of the rich man who stores up wealth	Lk 12:13-21
22	Repent, or Perish	Lk 13:1-5
23	Parable of the Barren Fig Tree	Lk 13:6-9
24	Jesus heals a crippled woman on the Sabbath	Lk 13:10-17
25	The Narrow Gate	Lk 13:22-30
26	Jesus heals a man with dropsy on the Sabbath	Lk 14:1-6
27	Parable of the Lowest Seat at a Feast	Lk 14:7-11
28	"Invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind"	Lk 14:12-14
29	Parable of the Cost of Discipleship	Lk 14:28-33

30	Parable of the Lost Coin	Lk 15:8-10
31	Parable of the Prodigal Son	Lk 15:11-32
32	Parable of the Shrewd Manager	Lk 16:1-13
33	Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus	Lk 16:19-31
34	Parable of the Owner and the Servant	Lk 17:7-10
35	Only the Samaritan leper comes back and thanks Jesus	Lk 17:11-19
36	Parable of the Persistent Widow	Lk 18:1-8
37	Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector	Lk 18:9-14
38	Zacchaeus the tax collector	Lk 19:1-10
39	Parable of the Ten Minas	Lk 19:11-27
40	Jesus heals the high priest's servant's ear	Lk 22:50-51
41	After His resurrection, Jesus appears to two disciples who were on their way to Emmaus	Lk 24:13-32
42	After His resurrection, Jesus appears to His disciples in Jerusalem	Lk 24:36-49

Table 4-9. Forty-two items that are only recorded in the Book of Luke

6. Unique Writing Style

There are some unique things about the way the Gospel of Luke is written. One of the most noticeable is that Luke uses the *summary* as a narrative device in his writing. This is a narrative method that is unique to Luke; at the end of each part or portion of the book, Luke summarizes the content covered so far so as to aid with the readers' understanding. He does this throughout the Gospel of Luke. Let's look at a few examples.

Luke chapter 1 is about baby Jesus and John the Baptist. At the end of this chapter in verse 80, it says, "And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel." So with this one simple verse, Luke summarizes and concludes chapter 1.

As for Luke chapter 2, it talks at length about the prophecies concerning baby Jesus. Then, near the end in verse 40, it sums up Jesus' early childhood this way, "And the child grew and became strong; He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him." And then a little later in verse 52, Luke sums up Jesus' adolescence: "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

It's the same thing in the Book of Acts. Luke employs the same writing style. If we read Acts 2:47; 4:4; 5:11, 16, 42; 6:7; 8:25; 9:31; 12:24-25 in context with the preceding and succeeding passages, we can see that Luke continues to include a summary at the end of each story.

IV. Structure of the Book of Luke

The Gospel of Luke is composed of a total of 24 chapters. These chapters can be grouped into ten sections according to the time period and Jesus' deeds. First, let's look at the overall structure of Luke in table format. Then, we will study the detailed structure of Luke, likewise using tables.

	Bible Passage	Description
1	Lk 1:1-4	Introduction
2	Lk 1:5-2:52	Jesus Christ's First Coming
3	Lk 3:1-4:13	Jesus' preparation for public ministry
4	Lk 4:14-9:50	Jesus' ministry in Galilee
5	Lk 9:51-10:37	Jesus' ministry in Samaria
6	Lk 10:38-13:21	Jesus' ministry in Judea
7	Lk 13:22-17:10	Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem
8	Lk 17:11-19:27	Jesus' ministry during the way from Galilee to Jerusalem
9	Lk 19:28-23:56	Jesus' Passion Week
10	Lk 24:1-53	Jesus' resurrection and ascension

Table 4-10. Ten overall sections of the Book of Luke

1. Ten Overall Sections of Luke

The Gospel of Luke can be called a chronicle, since it describes Jesus' life from His birth (4 BC) to His ascension (30 AD) in detail and in chronological order. The book can be divided into ten overall sections: introduction, the first coming of Jesus Christ, Jesus' preparation for public ministry, Jesus' ministry in the region of Galilee, Jesus' ministry in the region of Samaria, Jesus' ministry in the region of Judea, Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem, Jesus' ministry during the way from Galilee to Jerusalem, Jesus' Passion Week, and finally Jesus' resurrection/ascension. (Table 4-10)

2. Detailed Structure of the Book of Luke

(1) Introduction

The introduction to the Gospel of Luke is very unique. Addressing the book to a high-ranking individual named Theophilus, Luke explains his purpose for writing, method of writing, and how he collected the source materials for the book. This serves to highlight the fact that the book was written from a factual, historical point of view.

Introduction (Lk 1:1-4)	
1	Purpose for writing the book (1:1-4)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To record everything from the beginning, in detail and in chronological order (1:3) • Recipient: Theophilus (1:3)

Table 4-11. Introduction of Luke 1:1-4

(2) The First Coming of Jesus Christ

Luke devotes many pages to Jesus' birth and childhood. He treats in detail topics not dealt with in the other Gospels, such as the birth of John the Baptist, the background of Jesus' birth, and Jesus' childhood. The Holy Spirit inspired the historian Luke to record such stories as the story of the shepherds and angels at the birth of Jesus, Jesus' circumcision eight days after His birth, Simeon's prophecy, Anna's prophecy, Jesus visiting the Jerusalem Temple at age twelve, etc.

(3) Jesus' Preparation for Public Ministry

Luke, like the other Gospels, introduces John the Baptist into the narrative just before the start of Jesus' public ministry. A full 700 years prior to Jesus, the prophet Isaiah had prophesied concerning the appearance of John the Baptist (Isaiah 40:3). Malachi, 400 years before Christ, had also prophesied about John the Baptist (Malachi 4:5; Matthew 11:14). Luke teaches us that the appearance of John the Baptist was the fulfillment of these prophecies.

In his version of Jesus' genealogy, Luke tries to emphasize that Jesus is the savior of all mankind and the savior of women and

Gentiles in particular. Luke recounts Jesus' genealogy starting with Mary's father Heli and traces Heli's lineage all the way back to Adam, the first human. (In contrast, Matthew recounts Jesus' genealogy starting from Abraham and ending with Jacob, the father of Joseph (Mt 1:2-16).)

Jesus Christ's First Coming (Lk 1:5-2:52)	
1	Foretelling of the birth of John the Baptist (1:5-25)
2	Foretelling of the birth of Jesus Christ (1:26-56)
3	Birth of John the Baptist (1:57-80)
4	Birth of Jesus Christ (2:1-20)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The shepherds and the angels (2:8-20)
	Jesus' childhood (2:21-52)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus is presented at the Temple (2:21-24) • Simeon's prophecy (2:25-35) • Anna's prophecy (2:36-38) • Twelve-year-old Jesus visits the Temple (2:41-50)

Table 4-12. The first coming of Jesus Christ

Jesus' Preparation for Public Ministry (Lk 3:1-4:13)	
1	John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus (3:1-20)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "All people will see God's salvation" (3:6)
2	Jesus is baptized (3:21-22)
	Jesus' genealogy (3:23-38)
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genealogy following Mary's bloodline • Descendant of Adam
4	Jesus is tested in the wilderness (4:1-13)

Table 4-13. Preparation for the Public Ministry of Jesus

(4) Jesus' Ministry in the Region of Galilee

The region of Galilee was the main stage of Jesus' public ministry. In Luke 4:13-9:50, Luke records Jesus' ministry in Galilee chronologically and in detail. This is summarized in the chart below.

Jesus' Ministry in Galilee (Lk 4:14-9:50)	
1	Jesus' ministry in His hometown, Nazareth (4:14-30)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jesus' first sermon (4:16-27)• Jesus is rejected by the people of Nazareth (4:28-30)
2	Jesus' healing ministry in Capernaum (4:31-41)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jesus drives out an evil spirit (4:33-37)• Heals Peter's mother-in-law (4:38-39)• Heals many sick people (4:40-41)
3	Jesus ministers in many towns (4:42-44)
4	Jesus calls His first disciples (5:1-11)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Performs miracle of catching many fish (miraculous catch of fish)
5	Heals a leper and a paralyzed man (5:12-26)
6	Jesus calls Matthew (Levi) as a disciple (5:27-32)
7	Jesus ministers on the Sabbath (6:1-11)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (6:5)
8	Jesus calls the 12 Disciples (6:12-19)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There were many other disciples other than the twelve• A great many from Judea, Tyre and Sidon come to Jesus to be healed
9	Sermon on the Mount (6:20-49)

	Miracle ministry (7:1-17)
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Capernaum, heals a Centurion's servant (7:1-10) • In Nain, raises a widow's son from the dead (7:11-17)
11	Relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist (7:18-35)
	Women who followed Jesus (7:36-8:3)
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sinful woman anoints Jesus with perfume (7:36-50) • Women support Jesus and the disciples with their own money (8:1-3)
	Jesus speaks in parables (8:4-18)
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parable of the Sower (8:4-15) • Parable of the Lamp on a Stand (8:16-18)
14	Jesus' mother and brothers (8:19-21)
	Miracle ministry (8:22-56)
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus calms the storm (8:22-25) • In Gerasenes, heals a demon-possessed man (8:26-39) • Raises synagogue leader Jairus' dead daughter (8:40-42, 49-56) • Heals woman bleeding for 12 years (8:43-48)
16	Jesus sends out the 12 disciples (9:1-6)
17	Herod the Tetrarch is perplexed about Jesus (9:7-9)
18	Jesus feeds 5,000 with five loaves and two fish (9:10-17)
19	Peter's declaration (9:18-21)
20	Jesus predicts His death and resurrection for the first time (9:22-27)
	(Eight days later) The Transfiguration (9:28-36)
21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus takes Peter, James, and John with Him to the mountain
22	The next day, Jesus heals a demon-possessed boy (9:37-45)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The disciples are unable to cast out the demon • "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men" (9:44)
23	<p>Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven (9:46-50)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "One who is the least among all" (9:48) • "Whoever is not against you is for you" (9:50)

Table 4-14. Jesus' Ministry in Galilee

(5) Jesus' Ministry in the Region of Samaria

Jesus visited Jerusalem several times a year in order to keep the festivals of Israel (Lev 23:1-38). Now, the fastest route from Galilee to Jerusalem was through Samaria. However, due to His disciples' Jewish prejudice toward Samaritans (Jn 4:9), He usually took the roundabout route along the Jordan River and through Jericho, in order to avoid going through Samaria.

But strangely, towards the end of His three-year public ministry, He departed from His usual custom and chose to go through Samaria. (See Map 4-2) While in Samaria, Jesus taught the way of discipleship. He also sent out seventy of His disciples to gain missions experience. And He taught about neighborly love through the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Through these scenes, Luke shows us how Jesus was training His disciples little by little for the work of Gentile missions.

(6) Jesus' Ministry in the Region of Judea

After completing His ministry in Samaria, Jesus went down to the region of Judea. Here as well, Jesus continued His field training of His disciples, trying to raise their level of seeing things.

But why did Jesus visit so many different places? It was to provide His disciples with the full gamut of teachings they needed, through a variety of situations and events, before He left them.

Jesus' Ministry in Samaria (Lk 9:51-10:37)	
1	Jesus is rejected by a Samaritan village (9:51-56)
2	The cost of following Jesus (9:57-62)
3	Jesus sends out seventy disciples (10:1-24)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The disciples cast out demons (10:17)• "Do not rejoice that the demons submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (10:20)
4	Great Commandment (10:25-28)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vertical commandment, horizontal commandment
5	Parable of the Good Samaritan (10:29-37)

Table 4-15. Jesus' Ministry in Samaria

Map 4-2. Jesus' main routes during His public ministry

- Jesus usually used this way
- - -→ The way through Samaria



Jesus' Ministry in Judea (Lk 10:38-13:21)	
1	Jesus visits the home of Martha and Mary in Bethany (10:38-42)
2	Jesus' teaching on prayer (11:1-13)
	• The Lord's Prayer (11:1-4)
3	Jesus teaches the crowds (11:14-36)
	• Jesus and Beelzebul (11:14-26)
	• The sign of Jonah (11:29-32)
	• "The lamp of the body" (11:33-36)
4	Jesus' warnings to hypocrites (11:37-12:12)
	• "Seven woes" on Pharisees and teachers of the law (11:37-54)
	• "Be on your guard against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees" (12:1-12)
5	Jesus' teaching on wealth (12:13-34)
	• Parable of the rich fool who stores up earthly wealth (12:13-21)
	• "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (12:22-34)
6	How to prepare for Jesus' Second Coming (12:35-13:9)
	• Be awake and ready (12:35-48)
	• Watch for the signs of the times (12:49-59)
	• Repent, or perish (13:1-5)
	• Parable of the barren fig tree (13:6-9)
7	Jesus heals a crippled woman on the Sabbath (13:10-17)
8	Parables about the Kingdom of Heaven (13:18-21)
	• Parable of the Mustard Seed (13:18-19)
	• Parable of the Yeast (13:20-21)

Table 4-16. Jesus' Ministry Judea

(7) Jesus' Ministry in Jerusalem

Jesus passed through many towns in Judea and finally arrived in Jerusalem. Now, the time had come for Jesus to wrap up His training of His disciples. By this point, the disciples had become spiritually more mature, and accordingly Jesus elevated His level of teaching. In this portion of Luke's gospel, we find many of Jesus' most famous teachings.

(8) Jesus' Ministry during the Way from Galilee to Jerusalem

But while on the topic of Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem, Luke suddenly jumps to an event that occurred in a town of Samaria. Luke 17:11-12 says, "Now on His way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As He was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance..."

From these verses, we can speculate that Jesus first finished His ministry in Jerusalem, and then went back to Galilee. And from Galilee, He went back to Jerusalem, this time passing through Samaria. Jesus' ministry at this time is recorded only in Luke's gospel.

Jesus' Ministry in Jerusalem (Lk 13:22-17:10)	
1	The relationship between Jews and Gentiles, as regards salvation (13:22-35)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter through the narrow gate (13:22-30) • Jesus foretells the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (13:31-35)
2	Jesus heals a man with dropsy on the Sabbath (14:1-6)
3	Invite the "lowest people" (14:7-24)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parable of the Lowest Seat at a Feast (14:7-11) • "Invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame" (14:12-14) • Parable of the Great Banquet (14:15-24)
4	The cost of being a disciple (14:25-35)
5	Joy over one sinner who repents (15:1-32)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parable of the Lost Sheep (15:1-7) • Parable of the Lost Coin (15:8-10) • Parable of the Lost Son (15:11-32)
6	God and wealth (16:1-31)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parable of the Shrewd Manager (16:1-18) • The rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31)
7	Virtues of a disciple (17:1-10)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forgive one who repents (17:1-4) • Faith the size of a mustard seed (17:5-10)

Table 4:17. Jesus' Ministry in Jerusalem

Jesus' Ministry During the Way from Galilee to Jerusalem (Lk 17:11-19:27)	
1	Jesus heals ten lepers (17:11-19)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one man, a Samaritan, comes back and thanks Jesus
2	The coming of the Kingdom of God (17:20-37)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of the End Times (17:22-33) • Parables about the Rapture (17:34-35)
3	Jesus teaches in parables (18:1-14)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parable of the Persistent Widow (18:1-8) • Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18:9-14)
4	Who will enter the kingdom of God (18:15-30)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little children and the kingdom of God (18:15-17) • The rich and the kingdom of God (18:18-30)
5	Jesus predicts His death and resurrection for the 3 rd time (18:31-34)
6	Jesus teaches at Jericho (18:35-19:27)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus heals a blind beggar (18:35-43) • Zacchaeus the tax collector (19:1-10) • Parable of the Ten Minas (19:11-27)

Table 4-18. Jesus' Ministry during the Way from Galilee to Jerusalem



Image 4-1. Via Dolorosa

Via Dolorosa is a path, around 800 meters long, that Jesus walked from the place of His sentencing by Pontius Pilate to Golgotha, the site of His crucifixion. In Latin, 'Via' means 'way' and 'Dolorosa' means 'sorrow', so 'Via Dolorosa' means 'Way of sorrow' or 'Way of suffering'. Via Dolorosa is comprised of fourteen 'stations' where significant events happened. ① The place where Jesus was judged by Pontius Pilate, ② the place where Jesus received His cross, ③ the place where Jesus fell for the 1st time, ④ the

place where Jesus met His mother Mary, ⑤ the place where Simon of Cyrene took up Jesus' cross, ⑥ the place where a woman named Veronica wiped Jesus' face, ⑦ the place where Jesus fell for the 2nd time, ⑧ the place where Jesus spoke to the women of Jerusalem (Lk 23:28-31), ⑨ the place where Jesus fell for the 3rd time, ⑩ the place where Jesus was stripped of His garments, ⑪ the place where Jesus was nailed to the cross, ⑫ the place where Jesus died on the cross, ⑬ the place where Jesus was taken down from the cross, ⑭ the place where Jesus was laid in the tomb

Photo dated 1898~1946; Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA.

(9) Jesus' Passion Week

After ministering in Jericho, Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Now, His Passion Week began. Luke recorded everything that happened during Passion Week in detail and in chronological order, befitting a historian. It is summarized in the table below.

Jesus' Passion Week (Lk 19:28-23:56)		
1	Palm Sunday (19:28-44)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem • Jesus laments over Jerusalem (19:41-44) 	
2	Monday (19:45-48)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus cleanses the Temple 	
3	Tuesday, eight lessons (20:1-21:38)	
	①	Jesus' authority questioned (20:1-8)
	②	Parable of the Wicked Tenants (20:9-19)
	③	Giving to Caesar and giving to God (20:20-26)
	④	Debate concerning the resurrection (20:27-40)

	⑤ The relationship between Jesus and David (20:41-44)
	⑥ "Beware of the teachers of the law" (20:45-47)
	⑦ The poor widow's offering (21:1-4)
	⑧ Discourse on the Mount of Olives (21:5-38) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prophecy of the destruction of the Temple (21:5-6, 20-24) • Signs of the End Times (21:7-19, 25-33)
4	Wednesday (22:1-6) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judas Iscariot agrees to betray Jesus (22:3-6)
5	Thursday, The Last Supper (22:7-38) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Day of Unleavened Bread. Disciples prepare for Passover • (The Jewish Day starts at sunset) At sunset on Thursday, it was Passover • The Communion: Jesus' body and blood (22:14-20) • Jesus predicts His betrayal by Judas Iscariot (22:21-23) • Jesus predicts Peter's three denials (22:24-34)
6	Jesus prays at Gethsemane (22:39-46) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gethsemane: located at the foot of the Mount of Olives
7	Friday, Jesus' arrest and suffering (22:47-23:25) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (at around 12 AM) Jesus is arrested (22:47-53) • (at around 3 AM) Jesus is dragged to the house of Caiaphas the high priest and humiliated there (22:54, 63-65) • Peter disowns Jesus three times (22:55-62) • At dawn, Jesus stands before the public council (22:66-71) • Jesus is dragged off to Pilate and charged with crimes (23:1-7) • Jesus is taken to Herod and mocked (23:8-12) • Jesus is taken back to Pilate and tried (23:13-25)
8	Jesus dies on the cross (23:26-23:49)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way to Golgotha: Via Dolorosa (23:26-32) • At 9 AM, Jesus is nailed to the cross (23:33) • Soldiers cast lots for Jesus' clothes (23:34) • Rulers sneer at Jesus (23:35) • Soldiers mock Jesus and offer Him wine vinegar (23:36-38) • The two criminals who were crucified next to Jesus (23:39-43) • At noon, darkness falls over all the land (23:44) • At 3 PM, the curtain of the temple is torn in two (23:45) • Jesus dies (23:46)
9	<p>Jesus is buried (23:50-56)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When it is almost Sabbath (23:54) • Joseph of Arimathea buries Jesus' body in a new tomb (23:50-53)

Table 4-19. Jesus' Passion Week

(10) Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension

Luke recorded Jesus' resurrection and the events that followed in more detail than Matthew. For instance, while Matthew did not record Jesus' ascension, Luke did. Again, this is strong evidence that Luke had the eye of a historian. Luke used the scene of Jesus' ascension as the ending to his Gospel and the introduction to his next book, the Book of Acts. This way, the two books flow seamlessly.

Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension (Lk 24:1-53)	
1	Sunday, Jesus' resurrection (24:1-12)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women are unable to find Jesus' body (24:1-3) • Two angels appear and announce Jesus' resurrection (24:4-8) • The women tell everything to the disciples (24:9-12)
2	Jesus appears to two disciples on their way to Emmaus (24:13-32)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus teaches them that the whole of the Old Testament was about Himself (24:27)
3	At Jerusalem, disciples tell each other of having met the resurrected Jesus (24:33-35)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter too meets Jesus (24:34)
4	Jesus appears to the disciples (24:36-49)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus teaches that the whole Old Testament was about Himself (24:44) • Jesus' Great Commission (24:47) • "Stay in Jerusalem until you have received the Holy Spirit (Paracletos)" (24:49)
5	Jesus' ascension (24:50-53)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the Mount of Olives (near Bethany), Jesus ascends to heaven

Table 4-20. Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension

CHAPTER 5

The Gospel of Mark

I. Gospel of Mark: the Background

The Roman Empire existed from 63 BC to 476 AD. The empire was extensive, covering the entire breadth of Europe (excluding Germany), including parts of Britain. It also extended into the Middle East and North Africa. Until it at last fell to German tribes, the Roman Empire was a huge, powerful, and the longest-lasting empire in history (around 500 years). (Map 5-1)

Early Christian history is closely associated with the Roman Empire. Thus, if we have some knowledge about Roman culture and society, it is possible to get a much more realistic understanding of the New Testament. In the New Testament we often see the names of Roman emperors, and their tributary kings and governor-generals who ruled Israel under Rome. God, during the process of spreading the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire, allowed such political figures to persecute Christians. The Gospel of Mark was written in the midst of just such a great persecution. Now let's find out in detail the background of the book (in which the book was written), and also who the author, Mark, was.



Map 5-1. The Roman Empire at its greatest extent (circa AD 117) and the five centers of early Christianity

1. The Roman Emperors and Early Christianity

No less than eight Roman Emperors are deeply associated with early 1st Century Christianity. (Table 5-1) The first Roman emperor, Augustus, became emperor in 27 BC. He was the emperor at the time Jesus was born (Lk 2:1). Augustus let Herod the Great rule Judea on his behalf (Mt 2:1). At Herod's death, his kingdom was passed on to three of his sons; the land was divided among them. So after Herod's death in 4 BC, his youngest son Herod Antipas took over the region of Galilee. This is the famous 'Herod the Tetrarch' of the Gospels (Mt 14:1; Lk 3:1, Table 5-3).

The second Roman Emperor, Tiberius, became emperor in 14 AD. The Second Roman Emperor, Tiberius, became emperor in AD 14. Jesus' public ministry (26 AD~). Jesus's crucifixion / resurrection / ascension, the founding of the Church of Jerusalem (30 AD), the founding of the Church of Antioch (33 AD), and Paul's conversion to Christianity (35 AD) all took place during the reign of Tiberius. Tiberius' name was very famous and powerful. For instance, the Sea of Galilee was named 'Lake Tiberius' after him (Jn 6:1; 21:1). And even the city on its shore was named Tiberias. Emperor Tiberius appointed Pontius Pilate as the fifth governor-general of the region of Judea. Pilate reigned from 26~36 AD (Lk 3:1).

Order	Name	Birth~Death	Reign	Key Events during Reign
1 st	Augustus	63 BC~4 AD	27 B~4 AD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Caesar Augustus' (Lk 2:1) • Birth of Jesus
2 nd	Tiberius	42 BC~37 AD	AD 14 ~37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Tiberius Caesar' (Lk 3:1) • Jesus' public ministry, death on the cross, resurrection/ascension
3 rd	Caligula	AD 12~41	AD 37~41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrees that a statue of himself be erected in the Jerusalem Temple (AD 39)
4 th	Claudius	10 BC~54 AD	AD 41~54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Claudius' (Acts 11:28-30; 18:1-2) • Book of Matthew written (AD 50~52) • Paul arrives at Antioch church • Paul's 1st and 2nd missionary journeys
5 th	Nero	AD 37~68	AD 54~68	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book of Luke written (AD 60~62) • Book of Mark written (AD 65~68) • Paul's 3rd missionary journey • Paul's 1st house arrest in Rome • Paul's 2nd imprisonment in Rome
9 th	Vespa-sian	AD 9~79	AD 69~79	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gospel of John written (AD 68~70) • Israel falls, Jerusalem Temple is destroyed (AD 70)
10 th	Titus	AD 40~81	AD 79~81	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Son of Emperor Vespasian • Before becoming emperor, as a general, personally oversaw the destruction of Jerusalem
11 th	Domitian	AD 5~96	AD 81~96	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John is exiled to the island of Patmos • Book of Revelation written (AD 95)

Table 5-1. Roman emperors associated with Biblical events

R. Emperor	Time	Martyr	Method	Place
Tiberius (2 nd , AD 14~37)	AD 28	John the Baptist	beheading (Mt 14:12)	Jerusalem
	AD 32	Stephen	stoning (Acts 7:60)	Jerusalem
Claudius (4 th , AD 41~54)	AD 44	James son of Zebedee	beheading (Acts 12:1-2)	Jerusalem
Nero (5 th , AD 54~68)	AD 54	James son of Alphaeus	stoning	Jerusalem
	AD 60	Philip	hanging	Hierapolis
	AD 61	Simon the Zealot	crucifixion, sawed in two	Persia
		Barnabas	stoning	Salamis, Cyprus
	AD 62	James brother of Jesus	stoning	Jerusalem
	AD 64	Matthias	burning	Aksum, Ethiopia
	AD 65	Peter	crucifixion	Rome
	AD 66	Thaddeus	beaten with club	Armenia
	AD 68	Bartholomew	crucifixion	Armenia
		Mark	dragging	Alexandria, Egypt
		Paul	beheading	Rome
Vespasian (9 th , AD 69~79)	AD 69	Andrew	crucifixion	Achaia
	AD 70	Matthew	burning	Nubia, Ethiopia
Domitian (11 th , AD 81~96)	AD 82	Thomas	spear, sword	Mylapore, India
	AD 90	Timothy	beheading	Ephesus
	AD 91	Luke	hanging	Rome
	AD 96	John	cauldron of boiling oil	Ephesus

Table 5-2. Key martyrs of early Christianity

Gen	Name	Time/Region of Reign	Key Events	Bible Ref.
1 st	Herod the Great	37~ 4 BC Judea	Jesus' birth and the Magi; rebuilt Jerusalem Temple	Mt 2:1-16; Lk 1:5; Jn 2:20
2 nd	Aristobulus IV	—	Father of Herod Agrippa I	—
	Philip I / Herod II	—	Wife: Herodias Daughter: Salome	Mt 14:3; Mk 6:17
	Herod Archelaus	4 BC~ 6 AD Judea, Samaria	Relieved of his kingship by Rome; this region became a Roman governorship (province)	Mt 2:22
	Herod Antipas (Herod the Tetrarch)	4 BC~ 39 AD Galilee, Perea	Executed John the Baptist, Mocked Jesus before He was crucified	Mt 14:1-12; Mk 6:14-29; Lk 3:1, 19-20; 9:7-9; 23:6-12
	Herod Philip II (Philip the Tetrarch)	4 BC~ 34 AD Iturea, Trachonitis	Built cities such as Caesarea Philippi	Lk 3:1
3 rd	Herod Agrippa I	AD 37~44 Galilee, Judea, Samaria (entire region)	Executed James brother of John; imprisoned Peter	Acts 12:1-23
4 th	Herod Agrippa II	AD 53~70 Galilee	Met Paul in Caesarea	Acts 25:13-26:32
	Bernice	—	Agrippa II's younger sister & wife	
	Drusilla	—	Wife of Governor Felix	Acts 24:24

Table 5-3. The Herodian dynasty which ruled Israel during Roman times

The next emperor, Caligula, began reigning in 37 AD. His name does not appear in the Bible. But according to history, Caligula ordered in 39 AD that a statue of himself be built inside the Temple of Jerusalem. Now, Herod Agrippa I, the ruler of the region of Galilee at the time and an acquaintance of Caligula's, successfully convinced Caligula to abandon the plan. Nonetheless, there was a strong backlash from the Jews against even the hint of such a plan. The next emperor was Claudius, who began reigning in 41 AD. According to Christian history, Paul's first missionary journey (46~48 AD) and second missionary journey (50~52AD) both took place during the reign of Claudius. Many important events in early Christian history took place during his reign (Acts 11:28-30, 18:1-2).

In 54 AD, Nero became the fifth Roman emperor. At the time, Paul was on his third missionary journey (53~57 AD). Nero was very hostile toward Christians. Many of the top leaders of early Christianity, including Barnabas, James the younger brother of Jesus, Peter, Mark, and Paul, were martyred during Nero's reign (Table 5-2). Several emperors after Nero, Vespasian became the ninth emperor in 69 AD. Emperor Vespasian reconquered almost all of Israel except Jerusalem. Then he had his son, General Titus, reduce Jerusalem to ruins in 70 AD and put an end to the nation of Israel. This very same Titus became emperor after Vespasian in 79 AD. He was the tenth Roman emperor.

In 81 AD, Domitian became the 11th Roman emperor. Domitian was nearly Nero's equal in doing evil. He had Timothy, Luke, and John killed. Also during his reign, Apostle John was exiled to the Island of Patmos, where he wrote the book of Revelation in 95 AD.

As we have seen, early Christian history is intertwined closely with the history of the Roman emperors. Jesus had these emperors play important roles in the first century of the Christian era; everything happened within the full sovereignty of the Lord Jesus. The emperors mostly played the roles of villains (in the drama and movie). Due to their persecution of Christians, 1st century Christians became “kernels of wheat that fell to the ground and died” in order to bring salvation to many others; through the blood they shed and the lives they sacrificed, the Gospel was spread far and wide. Reading the Bible with knowledge of such historical background aids greatly in our understanding of the Bible – it widens our field of view.

2. Purpose of the Book of Mark

(1) Christians under Extreme Persecution

After Nero became the 5th Roman emperor, the persecution of Christians gradually intensified. Nero was born in 37 AD and died of suicide in 68 AD. Upon becoming emperor in 54 AD, he launched an extreme persecution of Christians. During his reign, many Christians were killed or imprisoned. (Table 5-2) In 60~62 AD, Paul was also imprisoned by Nero.

But why did the Roman Empire persecute Christians? The first reason was that Christians had a rather different understanding of the term “king of kings” than Romans. In the Roman Empire at the time, there were, under the emperor, many “kings” in various parts

of the empire who were subservient to the emperor. So for Romans, the “king of kings” was the Roman emperor. However, Christians kept proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the King of Kings. And not only that, they earnestly longed for this King of Kings to return (!). So this Christian message aggravated the Roman emperor, and Christianity came to be seen as the number one enemy of the Roman Empire. This was the first reason for the persecution of Christians.

The second reason was that Christians refused to follow the religion of the Romans (which was essentially a form of Babylonian religion). Christians taught that the Babylonian religion was of the Devil, pagan, and a cult. Christians also said that they were the “children of God”, whereas the Roman citizens were “children of the Devil” (1 Jn 3:10). Such Christian teachings were the second reason why the Roman emperor came to intensely persecute Christians.

Finally, in 64 AD, Rome was hit by a catastrophic event. Nero set fire to the city of Rome to amuse himself. (Nero was borderline insane) The whole city was destroyed, and many people lost their lives. Countless Roman citizens voiced their outrage and criticism toward Emperor Nero. And in order to placate the crowds, Nero blamed Christians the fire (!). The Roman government officially decreed that Christians were responsible for the fire. As a result, the persecution of Christians reached fever pitch. Just one year later, Peter was crucified upside-down in 65 AD, and Paul was executed during his second imprisonment in 68 AD.

(2) The Need for Words of Encouragement (and Hope)

There are several theories as to when the Gospel of Mark was written. But most scholars think that it was written between 65 and 68 AD in Rome. At the time, the Christian community had lost its highest leadership, and it was in the grip of Roman persecution.

Tacitus (56~117 AD), a non-Christian Roman historian during the 1st century AD, had this to say about the times: "No matter what consoling words he spoke to the people, no matter how grand an imperial gift he gave, no matter what sacrificial offering he offered to the gods, Emperor Nero could not escape from the people's belief that he had ordered the burning of Rome. So, in order to put an end to this rumor of his implication in the fire spreading, Nero blamed the Christians for the fire. Christians, on the whole at the time were hated by the masses. The name, 'Christian,' derives from 'Christ.' This 'Christ,' was someone who was executed by Pontius Pilate, who was governor of Judea during the reign of Tiberius. But, this harmful religion of Christianity, which was suppressed for a time, is once again arising in its homeland of Judea and in other parts of the Roman Empire." Tacitus wrote this in volume 15, page 44 of his book, *The Histories*.

Pontius Pilate, who appears in this quote, was a governor-general of the province of Judea. He was appointed by the second Roman emperor, Tiberius, and he served as governor from 26 to 36 AD. And Jesus, as we know, was crucified in 30 AD. So, the above record left by Tacitus, a non-Christian historian, coincides exactly with the Bible in terms of chronology. In fact, in the chronicles of

Tacitus, there is much detailed information about the kinds of persecution and suffering that Christians of his time were subject to. They really suffered unimaginable persecution and torture. Thus, there was a dire need for a Christian text that could console and encourage Christians, and give them the strength and hope to keep their faith.

Jesus entrusted Mark with the task of writing just such a book. Mark considered as his main audience the Gentile Christians who were suffering persecution at the time. Now, Gentile Christians had already come into contact with the Gospel of Matthew and Gospel of Luke. However, some of the terminology and expressions used in these books were still too difficult for them to understand. So Mark wrote his Gospel in a way that Gentile readers could easily understand; he added helpful explanatory comments to the "difficult" sections in the already existing Gospels. His goal was to well equip Christians with the Word so they could endure their extreme hardship and persecution.

AD	30	Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, ascension	
	50	Book of Matthew written	
	52		
	54	Nero becomes emperor	Time of Christian Persecution
	60	Book of Luke written	
	62		
	64	Nero burns Rome	
	65	Peter martyred	
		Book of Mark written	
	68	Paul martyred	
		Mark martyred	
		Gospel of John written	
	70	Fall of Israel Jerusalem Temple destroyed	

Table 5-4. Important events from AD 30-70

3. Who was Mark?

(1) The Author of the Gospel of Mark

The Gospel of Mark does not mention the author's name. In fact, some 1st to 3rd Century early Christian historians such as Papias (70~163 AD, Bishop of Hierapolis) and Eusebius (260~340 AD, historian from Caesaria) claimed that Mark was not the actual author of the Gospel of Mark. According to them, *Peter* was the one who actually received the Gospel message from God, and Mark only acted as Peter's scribe in recording and editing the Gospel message dictated by Peter. Thus, they relegated Mark to the status of merely Peter's spokesman or scribe. They did not recognize Mark as the author of a Gospel. Nor did they recognize Mark's spiritual authority. Such a dismissive attitude toward Mark persisted for quite a while.

Due to such influences, even famous theologians of 4th-5th Centuries AD thought lightly of the Gospel of Mark. Augustine (354~430 AD) regarded the Gospel of Mark as little more than an appendix or supplemental material to the Gospel of Matthew. Victor (425 AD~?, theologian of the Church of Antioch) shared this opinion. He too thought of the Gospel of Mark as only an appendix to the Gospel of Matthew. He claimed that the terminology and expressions used in the Gospel of Mark were too casual and not formal enough.

Though these theologians believed the Book of Mark to be the earliest written Gospel account, they discounted its value as a Gospel on account of its being too simple and elementary. This attitude of taking Mark's Gospel lightly continued into the 18th century.

With the onset of the 19th century, the Gospel of Mark finally began to be seen in a new light. A German theologian named H.J. Holtzmann (1832~1910) introduced a new proposal concerning the Gospel of Mark. Holtzmann, a liberal theologian, agreed with the Roman Catholic bishop & theologian Augustine that the Gospel of Mark was the first Gospel to be written, but he presented a completely different opinion of the value of the Gospel.

He claimed that the Gospel of Mark merited its own value as an independent Gospel. That is, it was not just a supplemental material to the Gospel of Matthew or the Gospel of Luke. He claimed that the Gospel of Mark was *complementary* to the other Gospels, not *supplemental* to them, since it treated topics not treated in the other gospels. ('*The Synoptic Gospels: Their Origin and Historical Character*', Leipzig, 1863)

In actuality, the motive of liberal theologians such as Holtzmann in trying to rehabilitate the Gospel of Mark's value was quite impure. They were only trying to use the Gospel of Mark to bolster their argument that Jesus was not divine but only a human; they were only interested in the Book of Mark in so far as to emphasize the fact that Jesus was an actual person who existed in human history.

As was briefly mentioned at the beginning of this book, the Gospel of Mark presents Jesus as the 'Suffering Servant' who came

to earth in human flesh. Now, liberal theologians fixate on this fact and try to limit Jesus to being only human, not divine. They limit Jesus to merely have been a human philanthropist, a friend of the poor, oppressed, and neglected. And since out of the Four Gospels the Gospel of Mark best portrays Jesus in this fashion, liberal theologians regard it as the "most excellent" of the Gospels.

This interpretation of liberal theologians is just plain wrong. While they are correct in saying that the Gospel of Mark is a valuable text, it is by no means merely a book about social justice. Rather, the Gospel of Mark was written from beginning to end by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to tell the story of how the Son of God came into this world as a man to be the 'Suffering Servant'. Also, the Book of Mark was not the first Gospel to be written, but the third. It was written to complement the Gospels of Matthew and Luke which came before it. But not only that, the Book of Mark has its own unique spiritual authority and purpose.

Happily for Mark, from the 20th Century on, evangelical theologians have come to regard the Gospel of Mark as an equal to the other three Gospels. Mark's status as a Gospel author and his spiritual authority have finally been reinstated.

(2) From a Faithful Dedicated Family

Mark, also called John (Acts 12:12), was from an upper class family. Being from a wealthy family, he received a high-level education. He was fluent in Greek, and being a Jew he naturally spoke Hebrew as well. He was also proficient in Aramaic, the universal language of the Middle East at the time, and Latin, the language of the Romans. Though almost nothing is known about

Mark's father, his mother Mary was a devoted follower of Jesus. She was an epitome of a Christian mother, during the early days of the Jerusalem Church (Acts 12:12). Mark appears to have inherited his spirituality from his mother's side.

His mother Mary's family is well known in the Bible for their dedicated financial/material support of Jesus' ministry. For instance, Mary possessed several parcels of valuable real estate in the heart of Jerusalem. And she provided the upper floor of one of these buildings for Jesus and His disciples' use (Mk 14:13-15). It was here, in 'Mark's upper room', that Jesus had His last supper with His disciples right before His crucifixion (Mark 14:15). Later on, the baptism of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost day also took place in this very room (Acts 1:13). What is more, Mark's upper room became the meeting place of the first Christian church in history, the Church of Jerusalem (Acts 12:12).

There is another, yet more famous, Biblical character from Mark's mother's family. He is Barnabas, Mark's uncle/cousin on his mother's side (Col 4:10). Barnabas' real name was Joseph. (Barnabas was his nickname.) The name 'Barnabas' means "encourager" (Acts 4:36). He was called by that name because at the time, he was very good at giving encouragement to just about anyone and everyone in the church community. He was one of the 120 original Christians who had gathered in the 'upper room'. Barnabas became one of the top leaders of the Jerusalem Church.

Barnabas was born in Cyprus and was part of the Jewish Diaspora there (Acts 4:36). He visited Jerusalem often on business. Along with his sister/aunt Mary, he was one of the greatest financial patrons of the Jerusalem Church. He even sold his own

land to help support the newly established Jerusalem Church (Acts 4:36-37). Since the twelve disciples of Jesus were not financially well off, they needed support from others. God provided for them through people such as Mary and Barnabas. At the time, Mary had sufficient assets all over Jerusalem to accommodate large numbers of people. So, it can be surmised that the buildings she owned served as venues for prayer meetings and worship services for the Christians of Jerusalem.

(3) Peter's Spiritual Son

When Mark was a young boy, Peter took special care in looking after him. This was in part to repay Mark's mother for all her devoted service to the Jerusalem Church, and in part it was because Mark needed to be looked after, being as young as he was. Naturally, the two became close, and eventually Mark became Peter's official interpreter. Mark was a bright young man who was highly educated and capable in multiple languages: Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Latin. Thus, he was a great help to Peter. Whenever Peter received a message from the Holy Spirit and gave a sermon, Mark was by Peter's side explaining the sermon and translating for him. Peter considered Mark his spiritual son (1 Pet 5:13). Mark, for his part, became one of Peter's core disciples and followed him until the latter's martyrdom.

Facts about Mark		
1	Hebrew name	John (Acts 12:12)
2	Mother	Mary
3	Uncle/Cousin	Barnabas (pastor of Antioch church (Acts 11:22-24; Col 4:10)
4	Family	Wealthy noble family, financially supported the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:12)
5	Level of education	Proficient in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin
6	Relationship to Peter	Spiritual son of Peter (1 Pt 5:13), Peter's sermon interpreter
7	Relationship to Paul	At first, had a difficult relationship (Acts 13:13; 15:36-41); Later, became a fellow worker (2 Tim 4:11; Philem 1:24)
8	Book written	Book of Mark
9	Mission Field	Alexandria, Egypt (Coptic Orthodox Church)
10	Martyrdom	AD 68, Alexandria, death by dragging

Table 5-5. Facts about Mark

(4) Founding of the Church of Alexandria

According to early Christian history and tradition, in 43 AD the youth Mark went to the city of Alexandria in Egypt. (Alexandria was Egypt's largest port city and a center of economy and culture.) And Mark introduced the Gospel to this part of the world for the first time. He founded the Church of Alexandria, which later grew into the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church. Thus, Mark is revered as the founder and first patriarch of the Egyptian Coptic Church.

Established after the Church of Jerusalem (30 AD) and the Church of Antioch (33 AD), the Church of Alexandria was the first Christian church in North Africa. It was founded in 43 AD, three years prior to Paul's first missionary journey (46 AD). Since their church was founded even before the churches founded by Paul, the Coptic Christians even to this day take pride in their long history. They call themselves the 'Orthodox' ("traditional") church.

When we look at Christian history, Alexandria produced several famous theologians and pastors. Notable among them are Clement of Alexandria (150~215 AD), Origen (180~254 AD), and Athanasius (296~373 AD).

On the other hand, Alexandria also produced some infamous heretics, such as Arius (270~336 AD). Arianism was a Christian heresy which denied Jesus' divinity. It was a venomous cult which had a devastating impact on the early Christian Church. Athanasius, also a native of Alexandria, was the foremost Christian leader in the fight against Arianism. So for this among other reasons, the Church of Alexandria was a leading and very influential church during the first five centuries of Christian history. It produced many Christian leaders, both good and bad; regardless of their individual theological inclinations, they all considered themselves spiritual descendants of Mark.

(5) The Relationship between Paul and Mark

① How They Met, How They Separated

The relationship between Paul and Mark was a bit dramatic. The youth Mark, after founding the Church of Alexandria, went back to Jerusalem to see his mother. This was around 45 AD. At the time, the Church of Jerusalem was in dire straits as there was extreme famine in the area of Jerusalem. News of this reached the Church of Antioch. At the time in Antioch, Paul was working together with Barnabas, the latter having invited Paul there (Acts 11:24-26). Hearing the news of famine from Jerusalem, Barnabas and Paul visited the Church of Jerusalem with monetary gifts (Acts 11:28-30). And there, Paul happened to meet Mark.

Now, there were two purposes why Paul and Barnabas visited the Church of Jerusalem. The first purpose was to officially introduce Paul to the Church of Jerusalem. And the second purpose was to deliver financial help to the Church of Jerusalem. After finishing their Jerusalem visit, Paul and Barnabas returned to the Church of Antioch with Mark (Acts 12:25).

Then in 46 AD, the three of them left on a missionary journey, i.e. Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13:4-5). But a problem arose during this journey. While they were in Pamphylia Perga, Mark gave up and returned home to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). Paul never forgot this incident.

While making preparations for their second missionary journey, a big dispute arose between Paul and Barnabas over Mark (Acts 15:36-39). Barnabas had again proposed to Paul that they take his nephew Mark along with them, but Paul denied this request. This

sparked a big argument between the two men. In the end, Paul and Barnabas parted ways over this; they could no longer work as partners. Though Barnabas was the one who had first invited Paul to the Church of Antioch and helped him get settled there, their teamwork ended over this issue (Acts 15:39).

After parting with Paul, Barnabas took his nephew Mark and headed for Cyprus. Paul, on the other hand, took Silas and headed north from Syria, past the province of Cilicia in the southwest corner of present-day Turkey, into Asia Minor (Acts 15:40-41). From this point on (50 AD), the Bible makes no more mention of Barnabas' missions work. Rather, the narrative centers on Paul's missionary work.

② Restoration of Their Relationship

About ten years later, Paul was imprisoned in Rome (60~62 AD). And surprisingly, Mark was by his side at this time. From this, we can tell that there was a restoration in their relationship (Col 4:10). In the book of Philemon, one of Paul's prison epistles, Paul calls Mark his "co-worker" (verse 24).

Interestingly, in 64 AD, Peter too wrote in his book 1st Peter that Mark was with him in the 'Church of Babylon' (1 Pet 5:13). What does this mean? There are many theories as to what Peter meant by Babylon. But the most influential opinion is that by 'Babylon,' Peter figuratively meant Rome. So based on this theory and all the other information we can piece together, we can deduce the following: while Paul was imprisoned for the first time in Rome, Luke was there with him, writing the Gospel of Luke (60~62 AD); and around the same time, Mark and Peter were also in Rome (circa 64 AD).

One year later, Peter would be martyred in Rome (65 AD). Although there is no official record of his death, there is a tradition that says that he was martyred by being crucified upside-down around 65 AD. After this date, Mark doesn't really appear in the Bible anymore. He appears once in a letter that Paul wrote to Timothy during his second imprisonment (67 AD). At that time, Timothy was in Ephesus. In his letter, Paul asks Timothy to come visit him in Rome. He also asks Timothy to bring Mark with him (2 Tim 4:9-11). From this, we know that Mark must have been living somewhere close to Ephesus. And since Paul wrote that Mark was "helpful" to him, we know that by this time their relationship must have been fully restored. One year later, Paul would be beheaded in Rome (68 AD).

Soon afterward, Mark followed Paul in martyrdom. He went to Alexandria, where he had 25 years earlier (in 43 AD) sown the seeds of the Gospel, and became the "kernel of wheat that falls to the ground and dies" (Jn 12:24). In Alexandria, he bravely met martyrdom by being dragged to death (68 AD). Ever since, he has been revered (Jn 12:26) as the first patriarch of the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church.

AD	43	Mark evangelizes in Alexandria Beginnings of Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church
	45	Paul arrives at Antioch church
		Paul and Barnabas visit Jerusalem church, bringing gifts from Antioch church (Acts 11:29-30)
		Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch, taking Mark with them (Acts 12:25)
	46	Paul's 1 st missionary journey
	48	Mark goes home halfway through the journey (Acts 13:13)
		Paul and Mark part ways (Acts 15:39)
	50	Paul's 2 nd missionary journey
	52	Barnabas and Mark go to Cyprus
	53	Paul's 3 rd missionary journey
	57	
	60	Paul's 1 st imprisonment Mark is with Paul in Rome, their relationship restored
	62	(Col 4:10; Philem 1:24) Peter is also in Rome (1 Pt 5:13)
	65	Peter martyred Paul's 2 nd imprisonment
	67	Paul requests Mark and Timothy in Ephesus to visit him (2 Tim 4:11)
	68	Paul martyred Mark martyred

Table 5-6. Paul and Mark's deeds

II. The Purpose of Mark's Gospel

The most important purpose of the Gospel of Mark was to provide strength, courage, hope, and consolation to Christians in the midst of persecution. At the time in the Roman Empire, there were many new Gentile converts to Christianity. And for these new Christians, it was very difficult to endure the cruel persecution which Emperor Nero put upon them. So first and foremost, Mark focused his Gospel on the 'Suffering Servant' aspect of Jesus in order to console such suffering Christians. In his Gospel, Mark keeps telling the readers that since Jesus Christ himself suffered, the followers of Christ must also participate in His suffering and persevere through it.

In addition, Mark took the portions of the Book of Matthew and the Book of Luke which Gentile Christians would have difficulty understanding, and explained them in simpler terms. For instance, he provided explanations concerning Jewish traditions and festivals, explained terminology and expressions which were only familiar to Jews, and sometimes translated Aramaic words into Greek. In this way, he supplemented the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, and made the Gospel more convenient for Gentiles (who were unfamiliar with Hebrew and Aramaic) to read.

1. Consolation for Christians under Persecution

At 16 chapters total, the Gospel of Mark is the shortest of the Four Gospels. Nevertheless, it devotes quite a large proportion of pages to the topic of 'suffering.' This is because the Gospel of Mark is focused on the aspect of Jesus as the 'Suffering Servant.' The purpose of this portrayal of Jesus was to help the Christians undergoing persecution at the time look forward to their eternal home (Heb 11:14-16), and thereby persevere through their suffering.

(1) Emphasis on the Message of Suffering

Regarding suffering, Mark first repeats (and re-emphasizes) the messages concerning suffering found in the preceding Gospels of Matthew (50~52 AD) and Luke (60~62 AD).

Foremost among these is the message that Christians must "bear their own crosses". This message, found in Matthew 16:24-28 and Luke 9:22-27 is repeated in Mark 8:34-38.

Here is Mark's version: "Then He called the crowd to Him along with His disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed

of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when He comes in His Father's glory with the holy angels." This is clearly a message intended for Christians undergoing persecution.

The second passage concerns discipleship. It is excerpted from Matthew 19:28-30 and Luke 18:29-30. In Mark 10:29-30, it says, ""Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life." This passage tells us that we endure our persecution, for if we do, God will bless us a hundred-fold.

The third is Mark 13:9-13, which quotes Matthew 24:9-14 and Luke 21:12-19. It is as follows: ""You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved." According to this passage, it is only natural for those who spread the Gospel to be hated and persecuted by the people. Therefore, Christians must persevere in order to be saved.

(2) A Unique 'Great Commission'

In Mark 16:15-18 is Jesus' Great Commission. But the Great Commission in Mark is unique from the Great Commission found in the other Gospels. In Mark's version, Jesus directs the Great Commission *specifically* to Christians undergoing persecution. Mark 16:15-18, "He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."

Here, "snake" refers to Satan and his followers (Rev 20:2). If we interpret this passage according to the time in which the Gospel of Mark was written, "snake" describes Emperor Nero and his followers. To say that Christians will be "able to pick up snakes and drink poison without being hurt" means that no matter how much the evil kings of the world may persecute them, in the end Christians will never be defeated. And not only that, God will perform miraculous signs through His faithful children. Demons will flee from them. Darkness will flee from them. The sick will be healed by them. And they will speak in new tongues. In other words, faithful Christians who spread the Gospel will be persecuted by the powers of this world, but the power of God will also be with them.

Mark thus consoled the Christians of the time who were suffering under Emperor Nero. He gave them hope that though Christians may be persecuted and martyred by the powers of this world, if

they obey the Great Commission entrusted to them until the very end, they will be taken up to heaven, receive crowns of glory, and be cherished as precious children of God.

Mark too lived by this teaching and eventually went to Paradise. Though he was martyred in 68 AD (by dragging), his legacy continues to live on through his spiritual descendants. The Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church, which Mark founded, bravely fought off the Satanic forces of the Roman Empire (until in 313 AD Emperor Constantine finally ended the persecution of Christians).

Later, even after Muslim forces conquered Egypt in 642 AD, the Christians of Egypt bravely resisted against the evil of Islam. Even to this day, 15% of Egyptians are Christians.

We must keep in mind that the persecution of Christians is something Jesus preordained. He said that Christians would be persecuted by the forces of Satan throughout the 2,000 years of Christian history before His Second Coming. Though during the last 2,000 years Christians have come under countless persecution from the likes of Babylonian religion, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, folk religion, shamanism, and atheist Communism, Mark's version of the Great Commission has always given Christians great strength and courage not to lose their hope of Heaven.

	Key Message	Mark	Parallel passages in other Gospels
1	"Whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it"	Mk 8:34-38	Mt 16:24-28 Lk 9:22-27
2	"No one who has left home... for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age... and in the age to come, eternal life"	Mk 10:29-30	Mt 19:28-30 Lk 18:29-30
3	"Do not worry beforehand about what to say... for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. The one who stands firm to the end will be saved."	Mk 13:9-13	Mt 24:9-14 Lk 21:12-19
4	"In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."	Mk 16:15-18	Mt 28:19-20 Lk 24:47

Table 5-7. The Book of Mark is a book of consolation and hope

2. Helpful Explanations for Non-Jewish Readers

Not only in terms of the book's message, but also in the way the Gospel of Mark was written, Mark gave foremost consideration to the (persecuted) Gentile Christians. For example, he explained to

them Jewish traditions. He also explained the seven Jewish festivals and the Jewish calendar system. In addition, he translated Hebrew expressions which appear in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, as well as Aramaic expressions, into Greek.

(1) Explanation of Jewish Traditions

In his Gospel, Mark provided additional explanations concerning the heritage and traditions of the Jews. For instance, Matthew 15:1-20 was a passage about Jewish tradition. In Mark 7:1-2, we find Mark's version of the same passage: "The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and saw some of His disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed." But directly following these verses, Mark provides an explanation of these verses in parentheses, for the Gentile readers: "(The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)" (Mk 7:3-4)

In Matthew's account of the same story, this washing tradition was not given any further explanation; thus, it was rather difficult to understand for Gentile readers not familiar with Jewish traditions. So in his Gospel, Mark explained that "According to Jewish tradition, one must always wash hands before eating."

(2) Explanation of the Jewish Calendar System

At one point in his Gospel, Mark even provides an explanation on the calendar system used by the Jews.

Let's look at three passages, Matthew 27:62, Luke 23:54, and Mark 15:42, which all speak of a 'Preparation Day.' Matthew 27:62 says, "The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate." Luke 23:54 says, "It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin." Mark 15:42 says, "It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached...".

If we compare these three verses, we can clearly see that Mark had added an explanation as to what 'Preparation Day' is. He explains that Preparation Day is "the day before the Sabbath". Since the Jewish Sabbath falls on our standard Saturday, Preparation Day is Friday for us (non-Jews). Because Mark added this explanation, Gentile readers could immediately know that Jesus died on the cross on Friday.

Why do Jews call Friday Preparation Day? It's because this is the day when they prepare for the Sabbath.

Judging from the fact that the Gospel of Mark often elaborates on content already recorded in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, explaining Jewish words and traditions in Greek for the sake of Gentile readers, we can be sure that the Gospel of Mark was written subsequent to these other two Gospels.

(3) Translation of Aramaic into Greek

In Mark's Gospel, we sometimes see unique sounding expressions that are not found in the Gospel of Matthew or Luke, namely expressions in Aramaic. Mark's writing style is unique in that he not only mentions these Aramaic expressions but also provides translations for them.

But why Aramaic? In actuality, many parts of the Books of Ezra and Daniel in the Old Testament, as well as the Talmud, were originally written in Aramaic. Also, Aramaic was the most commonly spoken language in the Middle East in the 1st Century AD. In fact, Jesus and His disciples all spoke a dialect of Aramaic.

But for Greek speaking Gentiles, Aramaic expressions were well-nigh incomprehensible. So, whenever Mark used Aramaic expressions, he provided Greek translations for them. This was possible for Mark because he was linguistically gifted, being proficient in Aramaic, Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. His provision of parallel expressions in Aramaic and Greek is but one sign of Mark's deep thoughtfulness towards his Gentile audience.

Now, let's look at a few of these Aramaic expressions.

① '*Boanerges*'

In Matthew 10:2-4, we find the phrase "James Son of Zebedee, and his brother John." In Luke 6:14-16, it simply says, "James and John." But in Mark 3:17, it says, "James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name *Boanerges*, which means "sons of thunder")". So as we can see, Mark has added the Aramaic term *Boanerges*, and its (Greek) translation, "sons of thunder".

② '*Talitha koum*'

'*Talitha koum*' is also an Aramaic expression found only in the Gospel of Mark. Mark mentions this expression in his account of the miracle where Jesus brings a dead girl back to life. Though the same miracle appears in Matthew 9:18-26 and Luke 8:41-56, Mark adds another degree of realism in his account by quoting the very same Aramaic expression Jesus spoke when performing the miracle. And of course, he provides the translation of the Aramaic. Mark 5:41 reads, "He took her by the hand and said to her, "*Talitha koum!*" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!").

In Matthew and Luke, there's no mention of the actual Aramaic expression Jesus used to bring synagogue leader Jairus' daughter back to life. But Mark quotes the exact phrase, and provides the translation as well.

③ '*Corban*'

'*Corban*' is another Aramaic term that only appears in Mark. Though Matthew 15:1-20 records exactly the same story, there the term is not used. Mark 7:11 reads, "you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is *Corban* (that is, devoted to God)- he no longer has to do anything..." Here, Mark once again follows up the Aramaic expression, '*corban*', with the translation "devoted to God".

④ *Ephphatha*

The Aramaic expression '*Ephphatha*' also only occurs in the Gospel of Mark (along with its translation). The passage in Mark where it is used, Mark 7:34, is parallel to Matthew 15:29-31. But in

Mark it says, "He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "*Ephphatha!*" (which means "Be opened!"). Once again, Mark introduces the Aramaic expression, followed immediately by the translation. In the same passage in Matthew, it merely says that Jesus healed the mute man. But Mark records the exact Aramaic expression Jesus used in His act of healing, along with the translation.

⑤ *Golgotha*

'*Golgotha*' means "skull" in Hebrew and Aramaic. It is translated as 'Calvary' in Latin. In all four Gospels, the place of Jesus' crucifixion is called 'Skull' (though the exact wording varies book to book). Luke 23:33 says, "When they came to the place called the Skull..." John 19:17 says, "Carrying His own cross, He went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called *Golgotha*)." As we can see, these two Gospels don't *directly* refer to this place by the Aramaic name *Golgotha*. However the Gospels of Matthew and Mark do. Matthew 27:33 says, "They came to a place called *Golgotha* (which means "the place of the skull")". Mark 15:22 says, "They brought Jesus to the place called *Golgotha*, which is translated, place of the skull". So, Mark especially emphasizes the fact that '*Golgotha*' is the original (not translated) name of the place where Jesus was crucified (see KJV Bible).

⑥ *Eloi Eloi Lema Sabachthani*

Just before Jesus died on the cross, He said in Aramaic, "*Eloi Eloi, lema sabachthani.*" This means, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" Mark records this Aramaic phrase spoken by Jesus

together with its Greek translation. Mark 15:34 reads, "And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*" which is translated, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"". (Mark explicitly says, "translated". (King James Version)) The same phrase is also recorded in Matthew 27:46, which reads, "About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?")". So while the two versions are similar, Mark especially emphasizes the fact of translation.

⑦ *Abba*

The Gospel of Mark also mentions the Aramaic word '*Abba*' together with its Greek translation, "father". Mark 14:36 says, '*Abba*, Father, He said, 'everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will. Do you see the Aramaic and its translation side by side? The other three Gospels do not mention the word '*Abba*'. However, Paul uses it a few times in his writings. (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6)

	Aramaic	Translation	Mark	Parallel passages in other Gospels
1	Boanerges	"sons of thunder"	Mk 3:17	Mt 10:2-4; Lk 6:14-16
2	Talitha koum	"Little girl, I say to you, get up"	Mk 5:41	Mt 9:18-26; Lk 8:41-56
3	Corban	"offering given to God"	Mk 7:11	Mt 15:1-20
4	Ephphatha	"be opened"	Mk 7:34	Mt 15:29-31
5	Golgotha	"place of the skull" (‘Calvary’ in Latin)	Mk 15:22	Mt 27:33; Lk 23:33; Jn 19:17
6	Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani	"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"	Mk 15:34	Mt 27:46
7	Abba	"father"	Mk 14:36	Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6

Table 5-8. Aramaic expressions and their Greek translations

	Purpose of Writing	Bible Passages
1	To emphasize perseverance in the face of adversity	"take up your cross" (Mk 8:34-38), virtues of a disciple (Mk 10:29-30), "stand firm to the end" (Mk 13:9-13), Great Commission (Mk 16:15-18)
2	To elaborate on Jewish traditions	The act of washing one's hands before eating (Mt 15:1-2) → Mark explains that this is a Jewish tradition (Mk 7:3-4)
3	To elaborate on Jewish calendar	Preparation Day (Mt 27:62; Lk 23:54) → Mark explains this is the day before the Sabbath (Mk 15:42)
4	To explain Aramaic in terms of Greek	Boanerges (Mk 3:17), Talitha koum (Mk 5:41), Corban (Mk 7:11), Ephphatha (Mk 7:34), Golgotha (Mk 15:22), Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani (Mk 15:34), Abba (Mk 14:36)

Table 5-9. Purposes of the Book of Mark

III. The Book of Mark's Characteristics

The Synoptic Gospels share much common content. The language, materials, events, Jesus' teachings, parables, and miracles found in them are very similar. In particular, 90% of the content of the Book of Mark is also found in the Book of Matthew. And 53% of the content of the Book of Mark is also found in the Book of Luke. This shows that Mark referenced both the Gospels of Matthew and Luke when writing his Gospel. There is debate among some theologians as to the exact dating of Mark's Gospel vis-à-vis the other Gospels. But there is no point in us getting into that argument. Rather, if we study the following characteristics of Mark's Gospel, we will find that it stands competently as a gospel on its own. While it does reference the two aforementioned Gospels, it complements them as well.

1. Emphasis and Omissions

(1) A Summary of Key Points

The first characteristic of Mark is that it is a summary of the content of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The Holy Spirit inspired Mark to edit the existing content of Matthew and Luke, to produce a "summary of key points" tailor-made for the needs and

circumstances of Mark's target audience. This is why the Gospel of Mark is the shortest of the four Gospels.

(2) Omission of Historical and Biographical Content

The Gospel of Mark does not put emphasis on historical or chronological details concerning Jesus Christ.

In fact, Jesus' genealogy, birth and childhood are omitted entirely in the Book of Mark. After briefly mentioning the ministry of John the Baptist, Mark goes straight into Jesus' public ministry. So, the Gospel of Mark is more of a "practical" Gospel than a scholarly, academic or historic one.

(3) Emphasis on Jesus' Passion Week

In order to help Christians suffering persecution, the Gospel of Mark devotes a large proportion of its pages to Jesus' Passion Week. Out of a total of 16 chapters, 6 chapters (38% of the book) cover Jesus' final week (Mk 11:1-16:20). Compared to the other Synoptic Gospels, Mark devotes the greatest proportion of pages to this topic. As was mentioned a few times already, Mark focuses on the aspect of Jesus Christ as 'the Suffering Servant'. So it's no surprise that Mark's Gospel devotes the most attention to Jesus' final week.

(4) Use of Simple Terminology

The Gospel of Mark was written using easy-to-understand terminology. It was not written for a Jewish readership, but for Gentiles, especially Gentile Christians who were undergoing persecution at the time, most of whom were not necessarily of a high educational background. That is why Mark does not use many scholarly words; rather, he uses simple, practical words. Out of the 1,270 words in the Gospel of Mark, only 80 are of a scholarly nature. The rest of the words are words that ordinary Gentiles of Mark's day could understand easily. In contrast, Luke uses 250 such high-level vocabularies, making the Book of Luke sometimes a challenge even for scholars to understand. Although Mark was highly educated, he did not use difficult terminology. Since he was writing the book for average Gentile Christians undergoing persecution, Mark tailored the book to their appropriate level of understanding.

2. Content that is Found Only in Mark / Missing only in Mark

(1) Events and Parables Found Only in Mark

There are three stories in the Gospel of Mark which are not in the other Gospels. One of them is the 'Parable of the Growing

Seed' in Mark 4:26-29. It reads, "He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

The second is the incident where Jesus heals a deaf and mute man in Galilee. It says in Mark 7:31-37, "Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. There some people brought to Him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him. After he took Him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then He spit and touched the man's tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "*Ephphatha!*" (which means "Be opened!"). At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak freely. Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

The third and last is the incident where Jesus heals a blind man at Bethesda. According to Mark 8:22-26, "They came to Bethesda, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led Him outside the village. When He had spit on the man's eyes and put His hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?" He looked up and said,

"I see people; they look like trees walking around." Once more, Jesus put His hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Jesus sent him home, saying, 'Don't even go into the village.'" So Mark provides detailed accounts of these two miracles.

(2) Parables Found in the Book of Matthew which are not in Mark

Mark contains only seven of the total 23 parables found in the Book of Matthew. The sixteen remaining parables are not in Mark. The contents omitted in Mark are listed in Table 5-9 below.

All in all, the Gospel of Mark covers the subjects of Christology, Salvation, Atonement, Missiology, Discipleship, and Martyrdom comprehensively yet succinctly. The reason for the conciseness in dealing with these topics is that Mark's focus is on 'Jesus has come into this world as a Suffering Servant'. Mark teaches Christians who are being persecuted for the sake of Jesus' name that Jesus himself suffered (Mk 14:12-15:41) and that Christians must follow Jesus' example (Mk 16:15-18). He promises that if they persevere through the suffering, they will receive great rewards in heaven (Mk 8:35; 9:41; 10:29-31, 39-40, 43-45; 12:1-12; 13:9-13, 24-31). So in his Gospel, Mark keeps encouraging these Christians to keep their hope of heaven alive and to take courage and consolation from that fact.

	Parables in Matthew	Bible Passages
1	The Wise and Foolish Builders	Mt 7:24-27
2	The Weeds	Mt 13:24-30, 36-43
3	The Yeast	Mt 13:33
4	Treasure Hidden in the Field	Mt 13:44
5	The Pearl	Mt 13:45-46
6	The Fishnet	Mt 13:47-50
7	The House Owner	Mt 13:52
8	The Lost Sheep	Mt 18:12-14
9	The Unmerciful Servant	Mt 18:23-34
10	The Workers in the Vineyard	Mt 20:1-16
11	The Two Sons	Mt 21:28-32
12	The Wedding Banquet	Mt 22:1-14
13	The Faithful and Wise Servant	Mt 24:45-51
14	The Ten Virgins	Mt 25:1-13
15	The Talents	Mt 25:14-30
16	The Sheep and Goats	Mt 25:31-46

Table 5-10. Sixteen Parables which are in the Book of Matthew but not in the Book of Mark

IV. Structure of the Book of Mark

The Book of Mark is made up of a total of 16 chapters. These chapters can be grouped into seven overall sections. The section on Jesus' birth and childhood, the first section in the Book of

Matthew, is missing in this book. Rather, Mark begins with the second section in Matthew, 'Jesus' preparation for His public ministry'. The parables and events that appear in the Gospel of Mark mostly appear in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke as well. But when you read the book keeping in mind the purpose and characteristics of Mark's Gospel that we have earlier discussed, you will discover anew Mark's unique perspective and ways of expression.

1. Seven Overall Sections of Mark

The Book of Mark can be divided into seven large sections: Jesus' preparation for public ministry, Jesus' ministry in the region of Galilee, Jesus' ministry in the region of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus' ministry back in Galilee, Jesus' ministry in the region of Judea, Jesus' Passion Week, and Jesus' death/resurrection/ascension (Table 5-10).

	Bible Passage	Description
1	Mk 1:1-13	Jesus' preparation for public ministry
2	Mk 1:14-7:23	Jesus' ministry in Galilee
3	Mk 7:24-30	Jesus' ministry in Tyre and Sidon
4	Mk 7:31-9:50	Jesus' ministry back in Galilee
5	Mk 10:1-52	Jesus' ministry in Judea
6	Mk 11:1-15:47	Jesus' Passion Week
7	Mk 16:1-20	Jesus' resurrection and ascension

Table 5-11. Overall structure of the Book of Mark

2. Detailed Structure of the Book of Mark

(1) Jesus' Preparation for Public Ministry

Because the story of Jesus' birth was already recorded in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark omits it from his Gospel. Instead, Mark jumps right to Jesus' preparation for His public ministry. This he treats very briefly; he tells of the preparation of John the Baptist, Jesus' baptism, and Jesus being tested. After this brief prologue, he gets right into the main part of his Gospel.

From the brevity of the prologue, we can almost feel the author's urgency to give consolation and hope to his Christian brethren under persecution.

(2) Jesus' Ministry in the Region of Galilee

During Jesus' three years of public ministry, the region of Galilee served as Jesus' main stage. Jesus made sure that the things He taught here and the things He did here to reveal His identity would forever prove to be a source of consolation, hope, courage, and power for Christians undergoing persecution. This is why Mark devoted 7 chapters out of the total 16 in his Gospel to recounting Jesus' ministry in the region of Galilee.

Jesus' Preparation for Public Ministry (Mk 1:1-13)	
1	John the Baptist prepares the way (1:1-8)
2	Jesus is baptized (1:9-11)
3	Jesus is tested in the wilderness (1:12-13)

Table 5-12. Jesus' preparation for public ministry

Jesus' Ministry in Galilee (Mk 1:14-7:23)	
1	<p>Jesus comes to Galilee (1:14-20)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus calls His first four disciples (1:16-20)
2	<p>Jesus' healing ministry in Capernaum (1:21-2:12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drives out an evil spirit (1:21-28) • Heals Peter's mother-in-law (1:29-31) • Heals many sick and drives out many demons in Galilee (1:32-39) • Heals a leper and a paralytic (1:40-2:12)
3	Jesus calls Matthew (Levi) as a disciple (2:13-17)
4	<p>Jesus' ministry on the Sabbath (2:18-3:6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debates concerning fasting and the Sabbath (2:18-28) • Heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath (3:1-6)
5	<p>Large crowds follow Jesus. Jesus appoints the twelve (3:7-19)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many sick from Judea, Idumea, regions across the Jordan, and Tyre and Sidon come to Jesus to be healed (3:7-12) • Jesus appoints the twelve disciples (3:13-19)
6	<p>Jesus teaches the crowds (3:20-4:34)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus and Beelzebul (3:20-30) • Jesus' mother and brothers (3:31-35) • Parable of the Sower (4:1-20) • Parable of the Lamp on a Stand (4:21-25) • Parable of the Growing Seed (4:26-29) • Parable of the Mustard Seed (4:30-34)

	Miracle ministry (4:35-5:43)
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus calms the storm (4:35-41) • In Gerasenes, heals a demon-possessed man (5:1-20) • Raises synagogue leader Jairus' dead daughter (5:21-24, 35-43) • Heals woman bleeding for 12 years (5:25-34)
8	<p>Jesus teaches in His hometown Nazareth (6:1-6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is rejected by the people
9	Jesus sends out the twelve disciples (6:6-13)
10	<p>Herod the Tetrarch is perplexed about Jesus (6:14-29)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The death of John the Baptist (6:17-29)
11	<p>Jesus' lordship over nature (6:30-52)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeds 5,000 with five loaves and two fish (6:30-44) • Jesus walks on water (6:45-52)
12	<p>Ministry in Gennesaret (6:53-7:23)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sick are healed by just touching Jesus' cloak (6:53-56) • "That which defiles" (7:1-23)

Table 5-13. Jesus' ministry in Galilee

Jesus' Ministry in Tyre and Sidon (Mk 7:24-30)	
1	<p>Drives out a demon from the Syrophoenician woman's daughter (7:24-30)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs" (7:28)

Table 5-14. Jesus' ministry in Tyre and Sidon

(3) Jesus' Ministry in Tyre and Sidon

Mark emphasizes that Jesus was no Jewish supremacist; Jesus did not have any pro-Jewish bias (over Gentiles). And Mark wanted Gentile Christians under persecution to know this. That is why the Gospel of Mark records the event where Jesus makes a personal visit to the region of Tyre to cast the demon out of the Syrophenician woman's daughter. Mark lets the Gentiles know that Jesus loves them, especially those who are sick, neglected, weak, poor, and persecuted.

(4) Jesus' Continued Ministry Back in Galilee

Mark then records Jesus returning to the region of Galilee and healing the deaf and mute, the blind, and the demon possessed. Thus, he emphasizes the aspect of Jesus as our healer. Mark also records the miracle of 'seven loaves and two fish', as well as Peter's declaration, the Transfiguration, and Jesus' prophecies concerning His death and resurrection. In this way, Mark teaches the Gentile Christians undergoing persecution about Jesus' identity. He gives the suffering Christians consolation and hope, reassuring them of their high places in the kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus' Ministry Back in Galilee (Mk 7:31-9:50)	
1	Heals a deaf and mute man (7:31-37)
2	Feeds 4,000 with seven loaves and two fish (8:1-10)
	• "I have compassion for these people" (8:2)
3	Pharisees ask for a sign (8:11-13)
4	The yeast of the Pharisees and Herod (8:14-21)
5	Jesus heals a blind man at Bethsaida (8:22-26)
6	Peter's declaration (8:27-30)
	• "You are the Messiah" (8:29)
7	Jesus predicts His death and resurrection for the 1 st time (8:31-9:1)
8	The Transfiguration (9:2-13)
	• "Jesus' clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them" (9:3)
	• "Do not tell anyone what you have seen until the Son of Man has risen from the dead" (9:9)
9	Jesus heals a boy possessed by an evil spirit (9:14-29)
	• The disciples are unable to cast it out • "This kind can come out only by prayer" (9:29)
10	Jesus again predicts His death and resurrection (9:30-32)
11	Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven? (9:33-50)
	• One who serves (9:35)
	• One who welcomes the littlest ones (9:37) • One who does not cause the little ones to stumble (9:38-50)

Table 5-15. Jesus' ministry back in Galilee

(5) Jesus' Ministry in Judea

Afterward, Jesus went down from Galilee to Judea, in order to keep His final Passover and take up the cross in Jerusalem. Mark diligently enumerates Jesus' deeds and teachings in Judea. He especially emphasizes the fact that those who are persecuted for the name of Jesus will be rewarded.

Jesus' Ministry in Judea (Mk 10:1-52)	
1	Debate concerning marriage and divorce (10:1-12)
2	Jesus blesses little children (10:13-16)
3	The rich young man (10:17-31)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus promises that those persecuted for His name's sake will be rewarded (10:28-30)
4	Jesus predicts His death and resurrection for the 3 rd time (10:32-34)
5	Lesson on serving (10:35-45)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Whoever wants to be first must be slave of all" (10:44)
6	Jesus heals a blind beggar named Bartimaeus at Jericho (10:46-52)

Table 5-16. Jesus' ministry in Judea

(6) Jesus' Passion Week

Mark emphasizes to Christians in persecution that Jesus was a Suffering Servant. Mark devotes a greater proportion of his Gospel to Jesus' Passion Week than either Matthew or Luke - six chapters (38% of the book) are devoted to the topic.

(7) Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension

The climax of Jesus' Passion Week is Jesus' death and resurrection. Similarly, for Christians in the midst of suffering and persecution, their greatest hope is the joy of resurrection. Mark, in order to deeply instill in Christians the hope of heaven, ends his Gospel with the scene of Jesus ascending to Heaven. Mark also teaches us his version of the Great Commission, which he received from Jesus. Mark lets his readers know that no matter how much persecution they may receive from this world, no matter if they are martyred, they have no reason to fear because the Christians' hope, their true home (Heb 11:14-16), is in the next world.

Jesus' Passion Week (Mk 11:1-15:47)	
1	Palm Sunday (11:1-11)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem• Jesus visits Jerusalem Temple (11:11)• At sunset, Jesus and the disciples retire to Bethany (11:11)
2	Monday (11:12-19)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The next day, Jesus returns to Jerusalem (11:12)• Jesus curses a fig tree (11:13-14)• Jesus drives out merchants from the temple (11:15-18)• In the evening, retires to Bethany (11:19)
3	Tuesday (11:20-26)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The cursed fig tree has withered (11:20-21)• "Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours" (11:24)

4	Ten lessons (11:27-13:37)	
	①	Jesus' authority questioned (11:27-33)
	②	Parable of the Wicked Tenants (12:1-12)
	③	Giving to Caesar and giving to God (12:13-17)
	④	Debate concerning the resurrection (12:18-27)
	⑤	The Greatest Commandment (12:28-34)
	⑥	The relationship between Jesus Christ and David (12:35-37)
	⑦	Beware of the teachers of the law (12:38-40)
	⑧	The poor widow's offering (12:41-44)
	⑨	Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple (13:1-2)
5	⑩	Olivet Discourse (13:3-37) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of the End Times • "What I say to you, I say to everyone: Keep watch!" (13:37)
	Wednesday, Preparations for Jesus' Death (14:1-11)	
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Bethany, at the home of Simon the Leper, a woman anoints Jesus' head with perfume (14:3-9) • Judas Iscariot agrees to hand over Jesus to the chief priest (14:10-11) 	
	Thursday, the Last Supper (14:12-31)	
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Disciples prepare for Passover • "the Upper Room" (14:12-15) • At sunset, it was Passover • Jesus predicts Judas Iscariot's betrayal (14:18-21) • The Communion: Jesus' body and blood (14:22-25) • Jesus predicts Peter's three denials (14:27-31) 	
	Jesus prays at Gethsemane (14:32-42)	
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.." (14:34) • "Father.. Take this cup from me" (14:36) • "Yet not what I will, but what you will" (14:36) 	

8	Friday, Jesus' arrest and suffering (14:43-)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (at around 12AM) Jesus is arrested (14:43-49) • All the disciples desert Jesus and flee (14:50) • A young man flees naked (14:51-52) • (at around 3AM) Jesus is humiliated in the courtyard of Caiaphas the high priest (14:53-65) • Peter disowns Jesus three times (14:66-72) • At dawn, Jesus is tried before Governor Pilate and flogged (15:1-15) • Jesus is mocked by Roman soldiers in the Praetorium courtyard (15:16-20)
9	Jesus is taken to Golgotha (15:21-23)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simon of Cyrene: father of Alexander and Rufus (15:21) • Golgotha: "the place of the skull"
10	Jesus dies on the cross (15:24-41)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the third hour (9AM), Jesus is crucified (15:24-25) • Passersby insult Jesus (15:29-30) • Chief priests and teachers of the law mock Jesus (15:31-32) • At the sixth hour (noon), darkness comes over all the land (15:33) • At the ninth hour (3PM), Jesus dies (15:34-37) • The temple curtain is torn in two (15:38)
11	Jesus' body is buried in a new tomb (15:42-47)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the evening, Joseph of Arimathea goes to Pilate and asks for Jesus' body (15:42-43) • Joseph of Arimathea: a respected member of the Council, who was waiting for the kingdom of God (15:43)

Table 5-17. Jesus' passion week

Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension (Mk 16:1-20)	
1	Sunday, Jesus' resurrection (16:1-8)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four women visit Jesus' grave (16:1-4) • An angel announces Jesus' resurrection (16:5-7) • The women are afraid (16:8)
	Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene (16:9-11)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the past, Jesus had driven out seven demons from her (16:9) • She tells the disciples that Jesus is alive, but they don't believe her (16:10-11)
3	Jesus appears to two disciples walking in the countryside (16:12-13)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rest of the disciples don't believe them (16:13)
4	Jesus appears to the Eleven Disciples (16:14-18)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He rebukes them for their lack of faith (16:14) • He gives them the Great Commission (16:15-18)
	Jesus' ascension (16:19)
6	Disciples obey the Great Commission (16:20)

Table 5-18. Jesus' resurrection and Ascension

CHAPTER 6

The Gospel of John

I. Background and Purpose

The Gospel of John was written in quite complicated circumstances. Politically, Christians were under intense persecution from the Roman government. Spiritually, cult teachings denying Jesus' divinity were spreading like wildfire. This latter problem of spiritual confusion needed to be set right urgently.

What is more, the early Christians had difficulty evangelizing the Romans. The Romans, being Europeans, were of a very different background than the peoples who had already been reached with the Gospel, such as the peoples of Asia, Cappadocia, Pontus, Galatia, Cilicia, and Syria. Europe and Asia were different geographically, culturally, and politically. Also, in terms of religion, Romans were steeped in Greco-Roman mythology and its related pagan pantheism. In order to spread the Gospel to such a people, there was a need for a book that firmly established Jesus' divinity. In other words, there was a need for an organized theological text that could systematically teach the Romans that Jesus is the Son of a God.

John was selected by God for the task of writing such a text. God predestined and called (Rom 8:29-30) John to write an organized textbook on the subject of Jesus' divinity. As one of Jesus' original disciples, John had a very strong belief that Jesus and God, the Father are one and the same God (Jn 10:30; 20:31).

It was God's purpose that through the Gospel of John Christians would be bolstered in the faith that Jesus is God, and thereby shine the light of the Gospel ever brighter in the Roman Empire.

In this chapter, we will take a detailed look at the background in which the Gospel of John was written, and find out who John the author was. Then, we will learn about what kind of critical relevance the Gospel of John has for us today.

1. Background of the Book of John

(1) The Emergence of Heresies

In the 1st Century AD, heretical cults denying Jesus' divinity began to emerge. The first of such cults was an independent denomination composed of the disciples of John the Baptist. This group, which was in existence even during Jesus' own lifetime, venerated and worshipped John the Baptist as the "founder" of their religion. When this cult first began to form, John the Baptist tried to dissuade his misguided followers by clearly stating to them that he was no god. In John 3:30-31, John the Baptist clarifies his identity vis-à-vis Jesus, "He must become greater; I must become less. The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all."

But despite John's warnings to them not to worship Him, large numbers of John's devotees continued to follow him around. Even after John the Baptist's death, they formed a religion around him. As these followers of John the Baptist grew in numbers and influence, it became necessary for Christians to be firmly established in the fact of Jesus' divinity, so as not to be confused by this cult.

Subsequent to Jesus' ascension, heresies denying Jesus' divinity further proliferated. Especially in 1st Century Galatia, among Diaspora Jewish Christians, a heretical teaching called 'Ebionism' emerged. The followers of this heresy, called 'Ebionites', made up theories denying Jesus' divinity, and they enticed many Christians. The Ebionites claimed that Jesus was not God. They claimed Jesus was only a prophet and religious leader. That is, Jesus was just a human being, albeit a holy one. This Ebionism spread rapidly throughout region of Galatia and posed a serious threat to Christianity.

Despite the fact that Christianity was under such spiritual attack, there was, as of yet, no text that dealt with the subject of Jesus' divinity in an organized systematic manner. While there were already three Gospel texts in existence, the Gospel of Matthew (50~52 AD), the Gospel of Luke (60~62 AD), and the Gospel of Mark (65~68 AD), and these texts did treat the subject of Jesus' divinity, they placed relatively more emphasis on Jesus' humanity. The Gospel of Matthew viewed Jesus as the King of Kings. The Gospel of Luke viewed Jesus as the Son of Man. And the Gospel of Mark's focus was on Jesus' role as the Suffering Servant. Of course, these three Gospels bore witness that Jesus is God. However, they placed more emphasis on the fact that Jesus came into human history as a 'total human'. Therefore, the three Synoptic Gospels were a somewhat inadequate, in and of themselves, to combat the assault on Jesus' divinity.

So all these circumstances motivated John to write his Gospel. There was need for a text which focused on Jesus' divinity and demonstrated in a logical and organized manner that Jesus is the

Christ, the Son of God, the 2nd person of the Trinity, and God himself (Jn 5:18, 10:30). The Gospel of John complements the Synoptic Gospels, which focus on Jesus' humanity, by concentrating on Jesus' divinity. Since Jesus' humanity and divinity are both important, Christians need to know about both in balance. Before the Gospel of John was written, Christians knew much more about Jesus' humanity than His divinity; this imbalance very much needed to be corrected. And God chose John to do just that.

John received a special anointing from God to write the book on Jesus' divinity (Isa 61:3; Mt 4:16; Acts 10:38; 2 Cor 1:21). John wrote his Gospel between 68 and 70 AD. After writing his Gospel, he went on to write three more texts that emphasize Jesus' divinity, all within a short time of each other. These are the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Letters of John (~85 AD). These three epistles also focus to a large degree on Jesus' divinity. In fact, John boldly proclaims in his letter that those who deny the divinity of Jesus Christ are "antichrists" (1 Jn 2:18; 4:3), "liars" (1 Jn 2:22), and "children of the Devil" (1 Jn 3:10). John thus urged Christians not to be led astray by heresies which deny Jesus' divinity.

(2) The Problem of Hellenization

Another big problem the Christians faced in the Roman Empire was the issue of what to do about Hellenism. Hellenism refers to the Ancient Greek way of thinking: Ancient Greek culture, politics, economy, education, ideology, philosophy, arts, mindset, etc. It was the system of thought which dominated the Ancient Greek world. Starting around 400 BC, Hellenism bloomed and grew around

Greek philosophers such as Socrates (470~399 BC), Plato (427~347 BC), and Aristotle (384~322 BC). After the demise of the Greek Empire (330~63 BC), Hellenism was absorbed wholesale into the Roman Empire (63 BC~476 AD). Humanism, a philosophy which we are very familiar with today, has its roots in Hellenism.

The Roman Empire succeeded the Greek Empire as the torchbearer of Hellenism. The elites of Roman society were especially drawn to Hellenism - so much so that they used Greek as their main language, instead of their native Latin. In all areas including arts, philosophy, science, society, politics, and economy, Greek ways of thought predominated and were considered the most sophisticated. Also, (just like Greeks) Romans loved to hear about new philosophies, ideologies, and political opinions. They loved to give voice to their ideas and have debates in plazas and in front of crowds.

We can see this even in the Bible. In Acts 17:16-31, Apostle Paul is in Athens debating the topic of resurrection with the Epicurean philosophers and the Stoic philosophers. It even says in Acts 17:21 that the people of Athens did nothing all day apart from speaking of and listening to new ideas. This was the influence of Hellenism. The Hellenistic peoples of the Roman Empire loved to reason and debate that much.

Let's look at Acts 17:16-21. "While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked,

"What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean." (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)" This particular episode with Apostle Paul took place in Athens. But such a cultural fondness for debate was readily found throughout the whole of the Roman Empire.

Though some Romans scoffed upon hearing the Gospel message, others wanted to know more about it (Acts 17:32). In any case, for the majority of Romans, be they intellectuals, philosophers, ideologists, debaters, teachers, lawyers, politicians, artists or the average Roman citizen, the Christian Gospel was something totally new to them. Influenced by Hellenism, the Roman way of thinking was humanistic. They placed great importance on human reason and logic, and therefore their way of thinking was human-centered. But in total contrast, the Christian message was entirely Theocentric. Thus, the Christian way of thinking, speaking, and acting was completely alien to the Romans.

In order to spread the Gospel to such a people, contextualization was very much necessary. To allow Romans to understand that Jesus is God who came incarnated into this world to save mankind, and that He died on the cross (achieving salvation for mankind), resurrected in three days, and ascended into heaven, it was

necessary to contextualize the Gospel into the Greco-Roman culture. It was necessary to package the Gospel in a way that Romans could understand.

God chose John to teach the Gospel to the Hellenistic peoples. Since it was not possible to evangelize them using the Jewish cultural approach, He allowed John to contextualize the Gospel to their Greek culture. So, from the outset of his Gospel, John uses expressions that are familiar to Hellenistic minds. He says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Jn 1:1). Here, "the Word" is *logos* in Greek. This word '*logos*' (meaning "the divine reason implicit in the cosmos") already leaned toward the topic of salvation in Greek philosophy. So, by substituting 'Jesus the Savior' into the word '*logos*', which the Romans already understood, John could readily explain Jesus' identity to them. This method contextualizing the Gospel to the Hellenized Roman culture really did work, and it helped the Gospel make great headway into Roman society, especially the elite class.

(3) When and Where was the Gospel of John Written?

There are a few scholarly theories about when the Gospel of John was written. Clement of Alexandria (150~215 AD), a famous Alexandrian theologian of the 2nd Century AD, theorized that the Gospel was written in 85 AD. But the most widely accepted theory is that it was written sometime between Paul's death in 68 AD and the fall of Israel in 70 AD. The reason for this is that in John 5:2 it says, "Now *there is* in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which

in Aramaic is called Bethesda." It says "*there is*", in the present tense. If the Gospel of John was written after the destruction of Israel, the Pool of Bethesda would have been destroyed along with the rest of Jerusalem, and the verse should have said, "there was," instead of "there is." So, it is likely that the Gospel of John was written sometime after the Gospel of Mark, probably between 68 AD and 70 AD.

As to where the Gospel of John was written, there are three theories. Because John lived most of his life in Ephesus, the Gospel could have been written in Ephesus. But others claim that it was written in Rome. And still others claim that it was written in Jerusalem. As for the intended audience, the Gospel of John was addressed to both Jews and Gentiles. And its purpose was to teach Jesus Christ's divinity to Christians in the midst of persecution.

Unlike the Synoptic gospels, the Gospel of John does not contain anything about Jesus' genealogy, birth, and childhood. In other words, the Gospel of John is not a history book. Rather, the Gospel of John is full of stories and teachings that explicitly support Jesus' divinity, which are not found in the Synoptic Gospels. That is why there are many passages about Jesus' divinity that are in John and only in John.

		Four Gospels	Intended Audience / Place of Writing	Perspective of Jesus	
BC AD	4	Jesus' birth	Each Gospel's Description of Jesus		
	30	Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, ascension			
	26	Many Jews convert to Christianity			
	50	Book of Matthew written	Jewish Christians / Jerusalem	The King of Kings	
	52				
		Many Gentiles convert to Christianity			
	60	Book of Luke written	Gentile Christians / Rome	The Son of Man	Jesus' humanity
	62				
		Christians undergo great persecution			
	65	Book of Mark written	Christians under persecution / Rome	The Suffering Servant	
	68				
		Book of John written	Christians who need to know that Jesus is God / Ephesus, Rome, or Jerusalem	The Son of God	Jesus' divinity
	70				
	Jerusalem Temple destroyed (Bethesda pool, Jn 5:2)				

Table 6-1. The writing of the Four Gospels

2. Who was John?

(1) John's Family Background and Personality

John was among Jesus' first group of disciples. John lived in the city of Capernaum, on the coast of Lake Galilee. His father, Zebedee, was a fisherman. Judging from the fact that Zebedee employed workers (Mk 1:20), we can surmise that he was fairly well off. The sons of Zebedee, John and James, had also been helping with their father's fishing business, until Jesus called both of them to become "fishers of men."

The name John is the English form of the Greek name *Johannes*. *Johannes* means "Jehovah is gracious." But since Jesus is the Jehovah of the New Testament (Isa 44:6; Rev 1:8; 22:13), the name John also means "Jesus is gracious." The Book of Mark describes John and James as '*Boanerges*' (Mk 3:17). The Aramaic term *boanerges* means "sons of thunder." And fittingly, John and James were both honest and courageous men.

Due to his personality, John sometimes uses very bold expressions in his writings. He uses terms such as "antichrists" (1 Jn 2:18; 4:3), "liars" (1 Jn 2:22), and "children of the Devil" (1 Jn 3:10). He uses these terms to describe those who dare to deny Jesus Christ's divinity even a little. This was very bold language on John's part.

Facts about John		
1	Greek name	Yowanness ("Yahweh is gracious")
2	Hometown	Capernaum
3	Father	Zebedee
4	Brother	James
5	Relationship to Jesus	One of Jesus' first four disciples
6	Nickname	Boanerges ("son of thunder", Mk 3:17)
7	Character	Courageous and honest (1 Jn 2:18, 22; 3:10)
8	Books written	Gospel of John, 1/2/3 John, Revelation
9	Mission Field	Ephesus and surrounding Asia Minor
10	Place of Exile	Patmos
11	Martyrdom	AD 96, Ephesus, cauldron of boiling oil

Table 6-2. Facts about John

(2) The Relationship between Jesus and John

John was one of Jesus' three closest disciples. (The other two were Peter and James.) Jesus always took these three with Him no matter where He went. They were with Him when He was transfigured (Mt 17:1). And they were with Him even when Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray (Mt 26:37).

Out of the three, John was Jesus' favorite disciple. That is why John refers to himself in his Gospel as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' (Jn 13:23; 19:26; 21:7, 20). John 13:23 says, "One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him." John

chapter 13 is the chapter on the Last Supper. In this scene, Jesus was sitting at the supper. And right next to Him, leaning against Him was John. Peter was well-aware of the fact that John was Jesus' favorite. That is why when Peter wanted to ask Jesus something or request something from him, he often asked John to do it in his stead (Jn 13:24-26). That is how close John was to Jesus.

John also loved Jesus very much. He was the first disciple to run to Jesus' tomb upon hearing the news of Jesus' resurrection (Jn 20:1-4). Even when Jesus was hanging on the cross, even though all other disciples had deserted Jesus, John stayed with him. Despite the danger, he stood by Jesus' cross along with Jesus' mother Mary. From His cross, Jesus looked down upon the two, and He asked John to look after His mother (Jn 19:26-27). According to the 2nd~3rd Century historians such as Irenaeus (130~220 AD, *Adversus Haereses III*, 1, 1) and Eusebius of Caesarea (260~340 AD, *Church History*, III, 1), from that point on, Jesus' mother Mary always accompanied John wherever he went. When John later settled in Ephesus, so did Mary. After John was martyred in Ephesus (96 AD), she also died there, although we do not know exactly when.

Concerning the relationship between Jesus and John, there is a theory that John was actually Jesus' younger cousin on His mother's side. In John 19:25, it says that when Jesus was hanging on the cross, below him, there were four women. First, there was Jesus' mother Mary; second, Jesus' mother's sister (Jesus' aunt); third, there was Mary the wife of Clopas, and fourth, there was Mary Magdalene. According to this theory, the second woman,

Jesus' mother Mary's sister (Jesus' aunt) was related to John. There is a clue about this woman in Mark 15:40. In describing the same scene at the cross, Mark records that there were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and Joseph, and Salome (mother of John and James) at the foot of the cross. It is surmised that this Salome was none other than Jesus' mother's sister (Jesus' aunt). This would mean that Jesus' mother Mary was John's aunt, and of course Jesus and John would be cousins.

	Nature of the Relationship	Bible Passage
1	John takes care of Jesus' mother Mary after Jesus' death	Jn 19:26-27
2	John is "the disciple whom Jesus loved"	Jn 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7
3	John was closer to Jesus than even Peter	Jn 13:21-25
4	John even reclined next to Jesus, leaning against Him, at the Last Supper	
5	Jesus took John with Him to the Mount of Transfiguration	Mt 17:1-2
6	Jesus took John with Him when he went to Gethsemane to pray	Mt 26:36-37

Table 6-3. The relationship between Jesus and John

Although the two may have been cousins, John never treated Jesus as a relative. This is because John knew Jesus to be God Himself (John 1:1-14). What is more, Jesus was not genetically related to His mother Mary. Therefore, John was Jesus' cousin only in a legal, nominal sense; they were not biologically related. And

John knew this. He strongly believed that Jesus is the “Son of God” (Jn 3:17), the “Messiah (Christ)” (Jn 4:25), and “one with God the Father” (Jn 10:30).

From a common-sense standpoint, it is out of the question for one to claim that his/her cousin is God.

This was particularly the case in Jewish tradition and culture, with its ironclad belief in God the Father as the one and only deity. For a Jew to claim that a mere man is God was clear blasphemy (Mt 26:65), and it was a crime punishable by death (Ex 20:7; Lev 24:16; Mt 26:66).

However, John, through the Holy Spirit’s teaching and guidance, clearly understood Jesus to be God Himself. Therefore, John declared in all his writings that Jesus is God (Jn 20:31). Though he received severe persecution from both Romans and Jews for this, John boldly proclaimed this message, even onto martyrdom.

(3) John’s Ministry

There isn’t much recorded about John’s ministry between the time he wrote his Gospel and the time he wrote the Book of Revelation. John wrote a total of five books: the Gospel of John (68~70 AD), 1st 2nd and 3rd letters of John (85 AD), and Revelation (95 AD).

According to tradition, John moved from Jerusalem to Ephesus in 70 AD. He was among the majority of Jews who left their homeland after the Roman armies under General Titus destroyed the nation of Israel and the Temple of Jerusalem in 70 AD; the destruction of Israel took place just as Jesus had prophesied in 30 AD (Mt 23:38; 24:2)—the prophecy was fulfilled exactly 40 years

later. It is said that John left Jerusalem with Mary the mother of Jesus and headed for Ephesus at this time. So, that means that from the time of Jesus' death on the cross (30 AD) to the destruction of Israel in 70 AD, John lived in Jerusalem. And from 70 AD onwards, he lived in Ephesus. Hence, Ephesus became John's second hometown and the base of his ministry.

From there, he likely traveled around Asia Minor and ministered to the seven churches of Asia that Paul had founded.

Then in 95 AD, John was arrested by the Romans and exiled to the island of Patmos. (Patmos is a small island 70 km south of Ephesus.) During John's exile in Patmos, Jesus appeared to him and revealed to him things that will occur in the future (Rev 1:9). So, Revelation (the last book of the Bible) was written on Patmos Island in 95 AD. Tradition says that after John wrote Revelation, he was released from his exile and went back to Ephesus. There, he continued to take care of Jesus' mother Mary, as Jesus had requested of him, until the time he was martyred (96 AD). And sometime afterwards, Mary also died in Ephesus.

Among Jesus' 12 disciples, John lived the longest. John was in many ways a blessed individual. First, he was chosen (according to God's foreknowledge and predestination), to be Jesus' most beloved disciple (Jn 21:20). Also, he was bestowed with the special privilege of writing the single definitive book on Jesus Christ's divinity as the one and only God. Not only that, he had the privilege of taking care of Jesus' mother Mary, and outliving all the other disciples. In the end, he received the special blessing of joining the ranks of the Christian martyrs, along with the rest of Jesus' disciples (Rev 6:9-11, 96 A.D.)



Map 6-1. The Region of Asia and location of Patmos

BC	4	Jesus is born
AD	26	John becomes Jesus' disciple
	30	Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, ascension
	68	John writes the Gospel of John
	70	Fall of Israel, Jerusalem Temple destroyed
		John moves to Ephesus
	85	John writes 1 st , 2 nd , and 3 rd epistles (1/2/3 John)
	95	John is exiled to Patmos (Rev 1:9) John is taken up to heaven and sees God's throne as well as the events that will occur during the End Times (Rev 4-22) John writes the Book of Revelation
	96	John returns to Ephesus John is martyred

Table 6-4. John's deeds

3. The Purpose and Importance of John's Gospel

In his Gospel, John clearly states his purpose in writing. "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name" (Jn 20:31). No matter what part of John's Gospel we are reading, we must keep in mind John's purpose in writing the book. The theme of the entire Gospel is that Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ. When reading the Gospel of John, we must always interpret and understand the contents of the book while firmly grasping onto this theme.

(1) The Purpose of John's Gospel

The core message of the Gospel of John is about Jesus' divinity. The first purpose of the Gospel of John is to convince the readers that Jesus is the Christ. 'Christ' in Greek is '*Christos*,' and in Hebrew is '*Messiah*' (Jn 1:41; 4:25). *Messiah* means, "the anointed one". The name originates from the Old Testament practice of pouring olive oil on the head of someone to appoint Him king, prophet, or priest (Ex 30:30-33; 1 Sam 24:10; 1 Kings 19:15-16). So, to say that Jesus is the 'anointed one' implies that he was selected exclusively by God the Father for the purpose of saving this world. That's why in the English Bible, Jesus is called 'the Anointed One' with capital letters 'A' and 'O' (Acts 4:26-27). Similarly, to denote Jesus' exclusive role as the savior of the world, the 'M' in the word

‘Messiah’ and ‘C’ in the word ‘Christ’ are always capitalized, and the definite article ‘the’ always precedes either title. So it’s ‘the Christ’, ‘the Messiah’, and ‘the Anointed One’.

John’s second purpose is to convince the readers that Jesus is the Son of God. In the English Bible, this title is always written with the definite article ‘the, and the ‘S’ in ‘Son’ and the ‘G’ in ‘God’ are always capitalized. Now, in the Korean language there’s no such thing as capitalization. But in English or the original language in which the Gospel was written, such capitalization means that the word is a *proper noun*, or the name of a particular person or place, of which there is *only one*. So when we read the Gospel of John, we must always seek to understand what exactly it means that “Jesus is the Son of God”.

Christ	Description	Bible Verses
Greek	Χριστός, Christós: the Christ	Mt 1:16; 16:16; Jn 17:3; 20:31
Hebrew	מָשִׁיחַ, Māšîaḥ: the Messiah	Jn 1:41; 4:25
Meaning	“The Anointed One”	Gen 30:30-33; 1 Sam 24:10; 1 Kings 19:15-16

Table 6-5. Meaning of the name ‘Christ’ (Jn 1:41; 4:25-26)

The expression ‘Son of God’ can easily lead one to mistakenly think that Jesus is somehow lower than God the Father. But if we look at the expression in the original Greek, this is not at all the case. The word ‘Son’ in ‘Son of God’ is used in two ways in the

Bible. First of all, when the word 'Son' (*Huios* in Greek) is written with a capital 'H', it refers to Jesus (Jn 1:34). Second, when the word is written with a lower case 'h', it refers to God's children in general (Christians) (Rom 8:15). This means that whereas Christians are the adopted children of God, Jesus is *absolutely the same* as God the Father in rank, quality, and quantity. So, the expression 'Son of God' means that Jesus is totally divine. When Jesus says in the Gospel of John that He is the 'Only Begotten Son', and when He says that the "Father and I are one", He is, again, implying His total divinity. (See table 6-6)

John firmly believed that in order to receive eternal life, one must believe that Jesus is the same as God the Father, i.e. that Jesus is God Himself (Jn 17:5). There are two other important verses relating to this in the Gospel of John. They are John 3:16 and John 5:24. The former says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son ('Huios'), that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." And the latter says, "Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life." Thus, the core message of the Gospel of John is that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God, and that only those who believe this will receive eternal life.

	Jesus' Description	Meaning	Notes
1	The Son ('Huios') of God (Jn 10:36; 20:31)	Jesus is totally divine	Christians are God's children ('huios', Rom 8:14) : God adopted us
2	One ('Hen') (Jn 10:30)	Jesus is equal in rank, quality, and amount to God the Father	Christians are all one in Christ ('heis', Gal 3:28) : but are all different in rank, quality, and amount
3	Only Begotten ('Monogenes') Son (Jn 1:14; 3:16)	Jesus (God the Son) and God the Father are uniquely the same	Mono ("one") + Genes ("species") The only two beings in the universe who are two separate personalities and one God at the same time are God the Father and God the Son (Jesus)
4	The Son of Man (Jn 3:13; 6:27; 13:31)	Jesus was totally human	"The one who came from heaven" (Jn 3:13), Jesus gave up all His divinity (KENO, "empty") and became totally human. (Phil 2:6-8)

Table 6-6. The relationship between God the Father and God the Son (Jesus), as described in the Book of John

	Core Message	Key Passages
1	Jesus is the 'Christ'	Jn 3:16; 5:24; 11:27 17:3; 20:31
2	Jesus is the 'Son of God'	
3	Whoever believes this	
4	Will receive eternal life	

Table 6-7. The core message of the Book of John

(2) The Importance of the Gospel of John

As it did in the 1st Century AD, the Gospel of John continues to play a very important role today in combatting the heretical teachings that deny Jesus' divinity. In the 1st Century, there was Ebionism, which was mentioned before. But moving into the 2nd and 3rd Centuries AD, more and more (such heresies emerged) heresies that deny Jesus' divinity emerged. Among them, Arianism had the most deleterious effect.

Arianism was named after its founder Arius (270~330 AD), one of the leaders of the Church of Alexandria. Arius rejected Jesus' divinity, claiming that Jesus was just an ordinary human being and that only God the Father was God. Due to this heresy, all the Christian churches at the time, including the Churches of Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, Constantinople, Rome, etc. were thrown into a state of doctrinal confusion. The evil influence of Arianism was so great that, between 300 and 500 AD, four separate church councils had to be held in order to combat its spread: the Councils of Nicea (325 AD), Constantinople (381 AD), Ephesus (431 AD), and Chalcedon (451 AD). However, despite these church councils' official condemnation of Arianism as a heresy and many efforts to eradicate it, the roots of Arianism were not destroyed in total, and Arianism is still alive to this very day.

Theological offshoots of Arianism can still be found among Christian cults today. One of the most representatives of such cults is Unitarianism. This "Christian" cult, which spread out from Harvard University to all of New England in the United States, denies Jesus' divinity. There are many Western church denominations which follow Unitarianism. The 'Uni-' part of the

name Unitarianism stands for 'one'; they believe that only God the Father is God. That is, they believe in the 'one unity' of the Godhead, not the 'Tri-unity' of the Godhead. Another Christian cult which follows the teachings of Arianism is Jehovah's Witness; this is a quintessential Arian cult. There is also the Unification Church (of Korea) which follows Arianism.

The problems don't end there. Even Religious Pluralism today (created by liberal theologians) is, strictly speaking, an offshoot of Arianism. In religious pluralism, liberal theologians have developed a new concept of 'Christ'. According to them, Christ is found in all the major religions of the world. That is, the Buddha of Buddhism is in actuality a form of Christ. Mohammed, of Islam, is a Christ. So is the god Vishnu of Hinduism. Shamans in shamanistic religions are also a form of Christ. And of course, there's Jesus Christ of Christianity. Thus, they claim that every religion has a 'Christ', and that everyone will be saved irrespective of which religion they practice.

Proponents of religious pluralism deny that Jesus of Christianity is the only God and Savior. In religious pluralism, only the "spirit" (character) of Christ is esteemed. And this "spirit of Christ" is claimed to exist in all religions. Therefore, they draw the preposterous conclusion that all religions are in actuality the same, and that all humanity will be saved regardless of their religion.

Jesus already prophesied 2,000 years ago that one of the signs of the End Times (Mt 24:3) would be the profusion of false teachings such as religious pluralism. He warned during His Discourse on the Mount of Olives (Mt 24:23-28) that many Christians would be enticed by religious pluralism and thereby lose their salvation.

Religious pluralism, in the same vein as Arianism, denies Jesus' divinity. It is the biggest and most harmful "Christian" heresy today.

Today, religious pluralism is spreading all over the Christian world like yeast (Mt 13:33). It is proliferating like poisonous mushrooms. Long having been exposed to a humanistic education and steeped in a humanistic way of thinking due to the influence of modern culture and mass media, Christians today accept religious pluralism as the norm without even knowing it. They even think it is "cool." But religious pluralism works on people's shallow rationality, intellect, and emotions to deny, alter, dilute, or contaminate the Gospel in devious ways. Thus, it can even entice the chosen children of God away from Jesus (Mt 24:24). It is a fearsome tool of Satan (Mt 24:3, 28) that we, Christians living near the second coming of Christ, should be very wary of.

So in the situation that we find ourselves in today, the teachings of the Gospel of John are becoming ever more important. In order to break down religious pluralism and establish a true Christology centered on Jesus, we must study and understand the Gospel of John ever deeper, wider, longer, and higher (Eph 3:19). In this way, we will receive the motivational force to strive ever to obey the Great Commandment, the Great Commission, and God's purpose in creating us.

Time Period	Cult	Claims
1st Century	Ebionism	Emphasized the necessity of following Jewish law and rituals. Was popular among Jewish Christians in Galatia.
4th Century	Arianism	Only acknowledged God the Father as God Founder: Arius (AD 270~330)
Post-17th Century	Unitarianism	Only acknowledges God the Father as God, "God in one person" (Jehova's Witness, Unification Church, religious pluralism, etc.)

Table 6-8. Christian cults which deny Jesus' divinity

II. The Gospel of John: Characteristics

Since the purpose of the Gospel of John, unlike the other Gospels, was to proclaim Jesus' divinity, there are many characteristics that set it apart from the other Gospels. First, John's Gospel is the only one that contextualizes the Gospel into the Greek worldview. Second, John describes Jesus using at least sixty different names and titles, in order to explain the Jesus' identity. The Gospel of John is unique not only in terms of content but also in terms of form. John uses a unique writing style: he begins each chapter with series of events, and then explains the hidden significance and message contained in these events. This style is unique to the Gospel of John.

1. Greek Dualism

While the Roman Empire was supreme politically, in terms of culture, ideology, and philosophy, it was still heavily influenced by Hellenism. People of Greek culture were very rationalistic and loved philosophy and reasoning. They highly valued the freedom of expression. All of the Western liberal arts such as politics, law, literature, and philosophy have their roots in Greek thought. Indeed, humanism as we know it today originated in Greek thought.

One aspect of Greek thought that we must focus on with regard to the Gospel of John is something called the 'dualistic worldview'. In the Greek dualistic worldview, the world is bifurcated (divided) into the 'world above' and the 'world below'. The 'world above' is the world of the non-material and the 'world below' is the material world. This line of thinking was put forward by Plato (427~347 BC), who was a disciple of Socrates (470~399 BC). In the dualistic worldview, the only real things are in the 'world above.' The material world that we can see with our eyes is but a "shadow" and an "image" of the 'world above', and therefore it is a fake. Plato's dualistic worldview has eight major characteristics.

The 'world above' is the world of ideas, the world of light, the real world. It is a world that is eternal, unchanging, and immaterial. It is not constrained by time or space. It is a world of good. On the other hand, 'the world below' is a "shadow" of the 'world above'. It is a world of darkness, a world of illusions. It is a material world and a world of time. It is a world of change, a world that is constrained by time and space, and a world of evil (Table 6-9).

When we apply Plato's dualistic worldview to human beings, the human being in the flesh is but an "illusion", a "fake", and a temporary being. A human being's true self is his/her spirit, whose home is the 'world above'. But this spirit has come down to the 'world below' and has been imprisoned in the material flesh. And that is why human beings are living an existence that is constrained by space and time, living tragic lives in a world of evil.

So in terms of Plato's dualistic worldview (i.e. the Greek worldview of the 1st Century), what was "salvation"? It was to escape from the fake and evil 'world below' and return to the 'world above.' And how/when could one accomplish this? When one had acquired the *knowledge* to understand the reason/logic of the universe. And how could one acquire this knowledge? The Greeks believed that there was something called 'logos' ("the Word"), which filled and pervaded the whole universe. And 'this logos' revealed the hidden reason/logic of the universe. Only by listening to and understanding the logos' revelations could one break the bonds of this 'world below' and ascend to the 'world above.' This was salvation as the Greeks understood it.

John took this concept of 'logos' from Greek philosophy and grafted (it) onto (it) the Gospel of Jesus Christ. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." 'The Word' here is 'the Logos' in Greek. Whereas the word 'logos' in Greek philosophy was usually written with a lower case 'l' and without the definite article 'the' in front of it, John wrote it with a capital 'L' and preceded by 'the'.

	The World Above	The World Below
1	World of ideas	Things in the world below are mere “shadows” of ideas above. A world of “fakes”
2	World of light	A world of darkness where it is impossible to realize the truth (knowledge)
3	World of reality	World of illusions
4	An immaterial world	A material world
5	An eternal world	A world of time
6	A changeless world	A world of change
7	A world not constrained by time or space	A world constrained by time and space
8	A world of good	A world of evil, an evil world

Table 6-9. The ‘World Above’ and the ‘World Below’

Now, concepts in the Greek dualistic worldview such as ‘understanding,’ ‘wisdom,’ and ‘logos,’ are rather complex and we don’t need to get into all of them. But we should at least know that the Gospel of John does have connections to Greek philosophy. That much we should know.

Because the Gospel of John starts out by saying, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God,” Greeks could understand it right away. They immediately understood that Jesus was the Logos, i.e. the way to revelation, the way to salvation.

As John chapter 1 proceeds, it continues to use Hellenistic concepts to explain Jesus Christ.

Chapter 1 can be summarized this way: “The Logos existed from eternity ago; this Logos created the universe and everything in it; Jesus is the Logos, and there is life in Him; this Jesus is the Light;

this True Light came down to the 'world below'; but the darkness did not recognize Jesus' identity; the Logos incarnated and came into the 'world below,' the 'world below' which the Logos had also created; there are two types of people in the 'world below', those who recognize the Logos for who He is, and those who do not; those who recognize Jesus and worship Him will receive salvation and be taken to the 'world above.' This is the theme of John's narrative from chapter 1 onward.

Throughout the whole Gospel, John uses the dualistic worldview to emphasize that Jesus is of the 'world above' but came down into the 'world below.' Let's look at a few examples. First, a direct quote from Jesus: "But He continued, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world" (Jn 8:23). In John 11:27, Martha (Lazarus' sister) says to Jesus, "Yes, Lord. I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." In John 16:28, Jesus says, "I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father".

John also explains that the world is divided into light and darkness. Jesus says in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life". And in John 12:46 He says, "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness".

	Theme	Bible Passage
1	Jesus is God, the Creator, a divine being	Jn 1:1-3
2	Jesus is God the Son, a member of the Holy Trinity	Jn 1:18
3	Jesus is the Word (Logos)	Jn 1:1, 14
4	Jesus the Word is the Life	Jn 1:4
5	Jesus the Word is the Light	Jn 1:4-5
6	This light is the True Light	Jn 1:9
7	This Word was originally in 'the world above'	Jn 1:2
8	This Word came down into 'the world below'	Jn 1:11
9	This Word became Flesh	Jn 1:14
10	This Word is God the Only Begotten (Monogenes) Son	Jn 1:18

Table 6-10. Ten themes in John 1:1-18

Thus, to explain Jesus' divinity to people of Hellenistic background, John contextualized the Gospel into the Hellenistic culture. Contextualization in Christian missions means adapting the Gospel message to the locality, culture, and situation of the people being evangelized to, without changing the essence of Jesus Christ. John's Gospel was able to effectively convey the message of Jesus Christ to people of the Mediterranean region (and beyond) who had been living in a Greek cultural environment for 400+ years since the time of the Greek Empire.

Even today, it's very important to contextualize the Gospel to the culture and situation of the people we are evangelizing to. We

need to convey the Gospel message in a form that the target audience can best understand. However, when we contextualize, we must take the utmost care not to damage the essence of the Gospel in the process; we must proceed strictly according to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

2. The Book of John's Unique Structure

The Gospel of John has a very particular structure. At the beginning of each chapter, there is an account of some event or miracle. Then, with that as the background, the message of Jesus follows. Almost all the chapters in John are structured this way. Let's take a look at a few examples.

In the case of John chapter 2, the chapter starts out with the miracle of Jesus turning water into wine (Jn 2:1-11). Here, wine actually represents the blood of Jesus. That is, it signifies Jesus' coming death on the cross. To demonstrate this more clearly, in the latter part of chapter 2, Jesus visits Jerusalem during Passover season (Jn 2:13). Upon seeing the Jews in the Temple selling animals for Passover offering, Jesus overturns their tables. Then He proclaims to the Jews that if anyone destroys this Temple, He will rebuild it in three days (Jn 2:14-20). At the time, no one, including Jesus' disciples, understood what Jesus meant by this. But three years later, after Jesus' death and resurrection, the disciples finally

realized that what Jesus had spoken of was His impending suffering, death, and resurrection in three days (Jn 2:21-22). So in John chapter 2, we are first shown the miracle of Jesus turning water into wine, then the account of Jesus' visiting the Jerusalem Temple. Then, we are explained how these events connect to Jesus' coming work on the cross.

Chapter 3 starts out with the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. Nicodemus inquires Jesus what it means to be "born again". Jesus replies to him that unless one is "born again of water and the Holy Spirit", one cannot enter the Kingdom of God (Jn 3:1-8). Directly following this conversation, Jesus explains that He is the 'Son of Man', the 'Son of God', and the 'Light' (Jn 3:9-21). The famous verse John 3:16 also appears here: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." Thus, in order to be born again, one must believe in Jesus.

John chapter 4 begins with the scene of Jesus asking the Samaritan woman for water (Jn 4:3-8). Then, Jesus goes on to teach that He is the 'Living Water', the 'Messiah', and the 'Christ' (Jn 4:10-26). Thus having received a life-changing realization, the Samaritan woman immediately turns missionary to her fellow Samaritans (Jn 4:28-30, 39). And at that time, Jesus tells His disciples of His plan to save the Gentiles (John 4:31-38).

Chapter 5 starts out with the story of Jesus healing an invalid man at the Pool of Bethesda who had been sick for 38 years (Jn 5:2-9). After being healed, the man confesses to the Jewish leaders that Jesus healed him. When the Jewish leaders persecute Jesus for healing someone on the Sabbath, Jesus tells them that He's the

Son of God and He is only doing what His Father wants. He also says in John 5:24, "Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life." Pay attention here to the phrase "has eternal life." It is not in the future-tense, but the present-tense. In the next chapter, Jesus continues His discourse on salvation.

Chapter 6 starts with the miracle of Jesus feeding 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two fish (Jn 6:1-15). Later in chapter 6, Jesus explains that He himself is the "bread of life". Jesus calls himself the "bread from heaven", "bread of God", "bread of life", and "living bread from heaven". He calls His blood "true drink". And He explains that unless we eat this "true bread" and drink this "true drink", we cannot have eternal life (Jn 6:26-58).

Chapter 7 starts with the scene of Jesus visiting Jerusalem in order to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:33-36). In the midst of crowds that want to capture and kill him, Jesus teaches that He is the 'Christ' (Jn 7:10-36). He also says that whoever believes in Him will have "rivers of living water" flowing from his/her innermost being. "Living water" means the Holy Spirit. So, Jesus was explaining that after He had finished His work on the cross and received glory, those who believed in Him as Lord and Savior would be baptized by the Holy Spirit (Jn 7:37-39).

Chapter 8 starts with the incident where the Jews bring to Jesus a woman who was caught in adultery (Jn 8:3-4). They bring her to Jesus to test Him whether He will have the woman stoned to death, in accordance with the laws of Moses (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22-24). Knowing this, Jesus does not condemn the woman; instead, He shows her grace and forgiveness (Jn 8:5-11).

The purpose of the Old Testament laws is to lead and guide us to Jesus (Gal 3:24). The Law teaches us God's standards; in the Old Testament times, the Israelites tried to live up to God's standards, but they failed time and time again. We ultimately realize, through the Old Testament laws, that we are completely corrupt beings who have no hope of saving ourselves; we come to the realization that we can be saved only through the blood of Jesus. Salvation comes to us wholly through the grace of Jesus (Rom 3:28; Eph 2:7-8). We are not saved by keeping the Old Testament laws (Rom 3:20); Jesus, who is the Truth, has set us free from them (John 8:32).

In addition to these chapters, many more chapters of the Gospel of John are structured in the manner we have seen. They start out with an event or miracle, and then conclude with an explanation of its spiritual meaning, or some other related teaching. We must note that the Gospel of John's number one purpose is to convince the reader that Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ (Jn 20:31). This is why after each miracle or event, there are messages that follow teaching us about Jesus' divinity. Unless we understand this unique structure and the purpose of the Gospel of John, we can make the mistake of picking out individual events in the book out of context and completely misinterpreting their meaning from what Jesus intended.

Chapter	Event or Miracle	Teaching
John 1	The Word became flesh	Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (verse 29)
John 2	Jesus changes water into wine, Jesus cleanses the Jerusalem Temple	Jesus will die on the cross and resurrect in three days (v 19-21)
John 3	Jesus and Nicodemus' conversation	God sent His one and only Son to save the world (v 16, 31)
John 4	The Samaritan woman and "living water"	The harvest of Gentiles (v 35-36)
John 5	Jesus heals a 38 year invalid at Bethesda Pool	"Whoever believes.. has eternal life and has crossed over from death to life" (v 24)
John 6	'Five loaves and two fish'	Real food, the Son of Man's flesh and blood (v 53-57)
John 7	(Festival of Tabernacles) Jesus visits Jerusalem	"Whoever believes in me will receive the Holy Spirit" (v 37-39)
John 8	The woman caught in adultery	"The truth will set you free" (v 31-32)
John 9	Jesus heals a man blind from birth	The Pharisees' spiritual blindness (v 39-41)
John 10	The Good Shepherd and his sheep	The shepherd will lay down his life for his sheep (v 17)
John 11	Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead	"I am the resurrection and the life.." (v 25-26)
John 12	Jesus is anointed with expensive perfume	Preparation for Jesus' death (v 7-8)
John 13-17	The Last Supper	Jesus teaches about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
John 18	Jesus is betrayed and arrested	"I shall drink the cup the Father has given me" (v 11)

John 19	Jesus' suffering and death on the cross	"It is finished.." (v 30)
John 20	Jesus' resurrection	Jesus gives the Great Commission (v 21)
John 21	Disciples catch 153 fish	"Feed my lambs", "Take care of my sheep" (v 15-17)

Table 6-11. The Book of John's unique structure

3. Jesus' Many Names

The Gospel of John refers to Jesus by many different names. There are at least sixty different names for Jesus used in the book. (Table 6-12)

Why does John express the name of Jesus in such a variety of ways? It has to do with the main purpose of the Gospel of John (Jn 20:31) - to teach the readers who Jesus is and to help them believe in Jesus and thereby receive eternal life.

The first reason why John uses a variety of names is to describe Jesus' identity in as much detail as possible, to give the readers an accurate understanding of Jesus.

And the second reason is to teach them about Jesus at a level that they can understand (i.e. at their eye level). To help everyday readers understand Jesus' identity, John describes Jesus using simple everyday words and expressions (rather than high and lofty concepts we can't understand).

The names John uses to refer to Jesus are for the most part not awesome, holy-sounding, God-like names. Other religions such as

Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism do not refer to their own deities or founders in this manner. In those other religions, referring to their founders or deities the way John refers to Jesus in his Gospel would be tantamount to sacrilege. But Jesus, despite the fact that He is the Creator God Himself (Jn 1:3; Heb 1:2; Rev 3:14), graciously allowed His name to be expressed the way it is in John's Gospel. And we Christians have the special privilege of being able to call the name of Jesus in a variety of ways.

In the end, Jesus' many names are an expression of God's love for us.

Though we humans are puny and dust-like before our Creator, in order to help us understand Jesus' identity, in order to explain Jesus' identity to us at a level we can understand, God allowed His name to be associated with lowly, unassuming everyday objects and expressions. In effect, God laid down His holiness and divine purity in order to connect with us, His insignificant creatures.

For this reason, we too must imitate Jesus when we spread the Gospel to others. Just as Jesus gave up His divine privileges and came into the world as a mere human in order to connect with human beings, we too must "incarnate" when we are evangelizing to people who are "smaller" or "lower" than us. We must lower ourselves in order to teach them the Gospel from *their* eye level.

Especially for missionaries among us, no matter where we go with the Gospel, we must "incarnate" ourselves into the culture and setting of the people we are evangelizing to. We must become a part of their culture and teach Jesus to them in a way they can understand. This is the only way to bear real fruit, beautiful fruit in missions. Table 6-12 help readers to find what those names are.

	Name of Jesus	Bible Passage
1	Word	Jn 1:1
2	Life	Jn 1:4; 14:6
3	Light	Jn 1:5; 3:19, 21
4	True light	Jn 1:9
5	Flesh	Jn 1:14
6	Glory of God's one and only Son	Jn 1:14
7	Grace	Jn 1:17
8	Truth	Jn 1:17; 3:21; 14:6; 18:37
9	The one and only Son, who is himself God	Jn 1:18
10	The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world	Jn 1:29, 36
11	One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit	Jn 1:33
12	Messiah	Jn 1:41; 4:26
13	King of Israel	Jn 1:49; 12:13
14	Son of Man	Jn 1:51; 3:13; 6:27, 62; 8:28; 9:35; 12:34; 13:31
15	The Jerusalem Temple	Jn 2:21
16	God's one and only Son	Jn 3:16, 18
17	Son of God	Jn 1:34, 36; 3:17; 5:25; 6:40; 10:36; 11:4, 27; 20:31
18	Savior	Jn 3:17
19	One who comes from above	Jn 3:31
20	One who is above all	Jn 3:31
21	One sent by God	Jn 3:34; 6:29

22	One who has everything in his hands	Jn 3:35
23	One who gives eternal life	Jn 3:36
24	One who gives living water	Jn 4:10
25	Prophet	Jn 4:19, 44
26	Savior of the world	Jn 4:42; 12:47
27	One with authority to judge	Jn 5:27; 12:48
28	True bread	Jn 6:32
29	Bread of God	Jn 6:33
30	Bread of life	Jn 6:35, 48
31	Bread that came down from heaven	Jn 6:41, 50, 58
32	Living bread that came down from heaven	Jn 6:51
33	Real food and real drink	Jn 6:55
34	Light of the world	Jn 8:12; 9:5
35	One who is from above	Jn 8:23
36	One who is not of this world	Jn 8:23; 17:14
37	The truth that will set you free	Jn 8:32
38	One sent by the Father	Jn 8:42
39	One who existed before Abraham was born	Jn 8:58
40	Gate for the sheep	Jn 10:7
41	Gate of salvation	Jn 10:9
42	Gate of life	Jn 10:10
43	Good shepherd	Jn 10:11, 14
44	One who is one with the Father	Jn 10:30

45	The resurrection	Jn 11:25
46	One who raises the dead	Jn 11:44
47	Christ	Jn 11:27; 20:31
48	He who comes in the name of the Lord	Jn 12:13
49	A kernel of wheat that dies	Jn 12:24
50	Teacher	Jn 13:13
51	Lord	Jn 13:13; 20:28; 21:15-17
52	The way	Jn 14:6
53	The true vine	Jn 15:1
54	One whose Father is the gardener	Jn 15:1
55	The vine	Jn 15:5
56	Friend of the disciples	Jn 15:15
57	Jesus Christ	Jn 17:3
58	Jesus of Nazareth	Jn 18:5
59	King of the Jews	Jn 18:37; 19:2, 19
60	God	Jn 20:28

Table 6-12. 60 names for Jesus that appear in the Book of John

III. The Structure of the Book of John

In the three preceding chapters, we studied the structures of the Synoptic gospels. Now, we will apply the same structural analysis to the Gospel of John, the fourth and last Gospel to be written. The Gospel of John (unlike the other three Gospels) records Jesus traveling between Galilee and Jerusalem a few times in order to keep the Jewish festivals. The Gospel of John can be divided into seven large sections according to Jesus' deeds (Table 6-13).

1. The Seven Overall Sections of the Book of John

The core message of the Gospel of John is that Jesus is God and that those who believe in Jesus' divinity will receive eternal life as the children of God (Jn 3:16; 5:24; 17:3). John writes in John 20:31, "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name." The criterion for salvation (i.e. receiving eternal life) is one's belief in Jesus' divinity. This is the message of John's Gospel.

Here is the content of the Book of John organized into seven sections (See Table 6-13).

	Bible Passage	Description
1	Jn 1:1-18	Introduction
2	Jn 1:19-2:12	Beginning of Jesus' public ministry
3	Jn 2:13-4:54	Jesus' first ministry from Jerusalem to Galilee
4	Jn 5:1-7:9	Jesus' second ministry from Jerusalem to Galilee
5	Jn 7:10-12:11	Jesus' ministry in Judea and Jerusalem
6	Jn 12:12-19:42	Jesus' Passion Week
7	Jn 20:1-21:25	Jesus' resurrection and Great Commission

Table 6-13. Seven overall sections of the Book of John

2. Detailed Structure of the Book of John

(1) Introduction

The Gospel of John is distinguishable from the Synoptic gospels from its very opening. In John's Gospel, there is no genealogy of Jesus like there are in the Synoptic Gospels. Nor is there an account of Jesus' birth and childhood, or information about the birth of John the Baptist. Instead, John launches straight away into

Jesus’ identity. He introduces Jesus to us. He tells us that Jesus is the Word, the Creator, the Life, and the True Light, and that He incarnated into a human being and came into this world.

(2) The Start of Jesus’ Public Ministry

Before Jesus begins His public ministry, John the Baptist first testifies about Jesus. John the Baptist confesses that he himself is not the Christ. He says he is only the “voice crying out in the wilderness” (Isa 40:3) that Jesus Christ has come to this world, just as Isaiah prophesied. He further confesses that he is not worthy to even untie the straps of Jesus’ sandals. He proclaims that Jesus is the Lamb of God who has come to takes away the sin of the world, and that Jesus is the Son of God.

Following John the Baptist’s testimony, Jesus’ public ministry begins with Jesus calling His first disciples. And through the miracle of turning of water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana, Jesus directly reveals His identity to His disciples.

Introduction (Jn 1:1-18)	
1	Jesus’ Identity (1:1-18)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jesus is the Word; Jesus is God (1:1-2)• Jesus is the Creator (1:3)• Jesus is the Life and the Light (1:4)• John the Baptist testifies about the Light (1:6-8)• Jesus is the True Light (1:9)• Jesus became flesh (1:14)• Jesus is God’s one and only Son (1:14, 18)

Table 6-14. Jesus' Identity

The Start of Jesus' Public Ministry (Jn 1:19-2:12)	
1	John the Baptist prepares the way (1:19-34)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29) • "This is the Son of God" (1:34)
2	Jesus calls His disciples (1:35-51)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrew and Peter (1:35-42) • Philip and Nathanael (1:43-51)
3	Wedding feast at Cana, Galilee (2:1-11)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus changes water into wine
4	Jesus stays briefly at Capernaum (2:12)

Table 6-15. The Start of Jesus' Public Ministry

(3) Jesus' First Ministry from Jerusalem to Galilee

On His first trip to Jerusalem since the start of His public ministry, Jesus visits the Jerusalem Temple on Passover, to show that He himself is the Passover Lamb (Ex 12:5; 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pet 1:19). Jesus tells the Jews who've come to the Temple to observe the Passover that the Temple is His own body. He also teaches Nicodemus that He is the Son of God and that only those who believe in Him will receive eternal life.

After this ministry in Jerusalem, Jesus returns to Galilee. On His way, He stops by Samaria and reveals His identity to the woman of Sychar. Then arriving in Cana, Galilee, He heals a royal official's son who is deathly ill. He heals the boy without even directly meeting him, with just His words. This was the second sign Jesus performed in Cana.

Jesus' First Ministry from Jerusalem to Galilee (Jn 2:13-4:54)	
1	Jesus goes to Jerusalem to keep the Passover (2:13-25)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleanses the Temple (2:14-17) • "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days" (2:19) • Temple is a prototype (symbol) of Jesus' body (2:21)
2	Jesus teaches Nicodemus (3:1-21)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order to enter the kingdom of God, one must be born of water and the Spirit (3:5) • Whoever believes in God's one and only Son will receive eternal life (3:16)
3	John the Baptist testifies about Jesus (3:22-4:2)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus and the disciples minister in the Judean countryside (3:22) • "The one who comes from above, and is above all" (3:31)
4	(Sychar, Samaria) The Samaritan woman and the "living water" (4:3-42)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Whoever drinks the living water will never thirst" (4:10, 14) • "Worship God in the Spirit and in truth" (4:23-24) • Messiah, Christ, Savior of the world (4:25-26, 42) • The harvest of Gentiles (4:31-38). • Many Samaritans believe in Jesus through the Samaritan woman's testimony. (4:28-30, 39-42)
5	Jesus heals a royal official's son in Galilee (4:43-54)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The second sign Jesus performed in Cana, Galilee (4:46, 54)

Table 6-16. Jesus' first ministry from Jerusalem to Galilee

(4) Jesus' Second Ministry from Jerusalem to Galilee

Jesus visits Jerusalem for a second time, again to observe the Passover. This time, He heals a 38 year invalid at the Pool of Bethesda. During this visit to Jerusalem, Jesus clearly testifies that He is the Son of God. And after returning to Galilee, He continues to reveal His identity to His disciples in ever more concrete ways. Jesus performs the miracle of 'five loaves and two fish', as well as walking on water. He also tells His disciples that He will eventually die on the cross. He teaches them that those who eat His flesh and drink His blood will receive eternal life, because His flesh is "real food" and His blood is "real drink".

(5) Jesus' Ministry in Judea and Jerusalem

Jesus again goes to Jerusalem, this time to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. There, He continues to teach at the Temple regarding His identity. He proclaims that He is the "light of the world", the "light of life", the "one from above", the 'Son of God', that He existed even before Abraham was born, that He is the healer of those who are "spiritually blind", that He is the "good shepherd", that He is one with God the Father, and that He is the resurrection and the life. After hearing Jesus' testimony about himself, the chief priests and Pharisees begin plotting to kill Jesus. In the meantime, Jesus carries out His ministry in nearby Bethany, Ephraim, and the vicinity of River Jordan. Finally, six days before the Passover, Jesus visits the house of Martha and Mary at Bethany. At this time,

Mary anoints Jesus' feet with very expensive perfume, thus foreshadowing Jesus' coming death.

Jesus' Second Ministry from Jerusalem to Galilee (Jn 5:1-7:9)	
1	Jesus' second visit to Jerusalem (5:1-47)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At Bethesda Pool, heals a man who had been lying invalid for 38 years (5:1-15) • Jesus proclaims that He is the Son of God (5:16-29) • Jesus' testimony (5:30-47) • The Old Testament Scriptures are about Jesus (5:39, 46-47)
2	Jesus returns to Galilee (6:1-7:9)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeds 5,000 with five loaves and two fish (6:1-15) • Walks on water (6:16-21) • The "bread of life", the "bread that came down from heaven", "real food", "real drink" (6:22-59) • Many disciples leave Jesus (6:60-66) • Jesus predicts His betrayal by Judas Iscariot ("a devil") (6:64, 70-71) • Jesus' own brothers do not believe in Him (7:1-9)

Table 6-17. Jesus' second ministry from Jerusalem to Galilee

Jesus' Ministry in Judea (Jn 7:10-12:11)	
1	Jesus visits Jerusalem for the third time, for the Feast of Tabernacles (7:10-10:21)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus teaches at the Temple (7:14-24) • Debate over whether Jesus is the Messiah (7:25-53) • Jesus promises that those who believe in Him will receive the Holy Spirit (7:37-39)
2	The woman caught in adultery (8:1-11)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After spending the night at Bethany, Jesus returns to the Temple the next day (8:1-2) • "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" (8:7)

3	Jesus testifies about himself (8:12-59)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I am the light of the world" (8:12) • "My testimony is true" (8:13-20) • "I am from above", "I am not of this world" (8:21-30) • Abraham's children (8:31-41) • Children of the Devil (8:42-47) • Jesus existed before Abraham was born (8:48-59)
4	Jesus heals a man born blind (9:1-41)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "This happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him" (9:3) • Pharisees investigate the healing of the blind man (9:13-34) • Spiritual blindness (9:35-41)
5	The Good Shepherd and his sheep (10:1-21)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The gate for the sheep, the Good Shepherd (10:7, 11) • "I lay down my life, only to take it up again" (10:15, 17)
6	(Festival of Dedication/Hanukkah) Jesus teaches at the Temple (10:22-42)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus proclaims that He is the Son of God (10:22-39) • Jesus' ministry at the River Jordan (10:40-42)
7	At Bethany, Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead (11:1-44)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lazarus' death (11:1-16) • "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:17-37) • Lazarus is revived (11:38-44)
8	The plot to kill Jesus (11:45-57)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief priest Caiaphas' confession (11:49-52) • Jesus stays at Ephraim (11:54-57)
9	Six days before the Passover, Jesus comes to Bethany (12:1-11)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary pours expensive perfume on Jesus' feet and wipes them with her hair (12:3) • "This is.. for the day of my burial" (12:7)

Table 6-18. Jesus' ministry in Judea

(6) Jesus' Passion Week

In this part of the Book of John, Jesus enters Jerusalem to die as the Passover Lamb on Mt. Moriah (Gen 22:2). Jesus says that a "kernel of wheat must fall to the ground and die" in order to bear much fruit, meaning that through His death, many will receive eternal life. During the Passover meal with His disciples on Thursday evening (Friday in terms of Jewish time), Jesus gives His last sermon to His disciples. The sermon is on ten subjects.

Even after He is arrested by the soldiers of the chief priests and Pharisees, Jesus boldly testifies that He is the Son of God. As a result, the Jews find Him guilty of blasphemy and He dies by crucifixion.

John devotes a considerable proportion of his Gospel to Jesus' Passion Week (refer to Table 4-7). He does this to show Christians in detail how the 'Mystery of God' (God's wondrous work of salvation), which He planned from before Creation, was fulfilled.

Jesus' Passion Week (Jn 12:12-19:42)	
1	Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem (12:12-19)
	• Palm Sunday, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" (12:13)
2	"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (12:20-36)
	• "A kernel of wheat must die, in order to produce many seeds" (12:24)
3	The Jews don't believe in Jesus (12:37-50)
	• "The Lord has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts— so that their eyes cannot see, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and have me heal them" (12:40)
	• "I have come to save the world" (12:47)

4	Thursday, The Last Supper (13:1-30)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus washes His disciples' feet (13:3-17) • Jesus predicts Judas Iscariot's betrayal (13:18-26) • Satan enters into Judas; Judas leaves the supper quickly (13:27-30)
	Jesus' sermon during the Last Supper (13:31-16:33)
	<p>① Jesus' new commandment: "Love one another" (13:31-35)</p> <p>② Jesus predicts Peter's three denials (13:36-38)</p> <p>③ Jesus comforts His disciples; the hope of heaven (14:1-4)</p> <p>④ "I am the way and the truth and the life" (14:5-11)</p>
5	⑤ "If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it" (14:12-14)
	⑥ Jesus promises the Holy Spirit (advocate, Paracletos) (14:15-31)
	⑦ "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener" (15:1-17)
	⑧ Jesus predicts that the disciples will be hated by the world (15:18-16:4)
	⑨ The ministry of the Holy Spirit (16:5-15)
	⑩ Jesus predicts that the disciples' grief will turn to joy (16:16-33)
6	Jesus' special prayer (17:1-26)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer for himself (17:1-5) • Prayer for His disciples (17:6-19) • Prayer for all believers (17:20-26)
	Jesus' arrest and suffering (18:1-19:16)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus is arrested at the Garden of Gethsemane (18:1-11) • Jesus is taken to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas the high priest (18:12-14) • Peter's first denial (18:15-18) • The high priest questions Jesus (18:19-24) • Peter's second and third denials (18:25-27) • At dawn, Jesus is tried before Governor Pilate and flogged (18:28-19:16) • The governor's soldiers mock Jesus (19:2-3)

	Jesus dies on the cross (19:17-37)
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus is taken to Golgotha (19:17) • Jesus is nailed to the cross (19:18-22) • The soldiers divide Jesus' clothes and cast lots for them (19:23-24) • Jesus entrusts His mother Mary to John (19:25-27) • "It is finished", Jesus dies (19:28-30) • A soldier pierces Jesus' side with a spear (19:31-37)
9	Joseph of Arimathea buries Jesus' body in a new tomb (19:38-42)

Table 6-19. Jesus Passion week

(7) Jesus' Resurrection and the Great Commission

Jesus resurrects on the third day after His death. He then personally appears before His disciples in His resurrected body, reconfirming to them His (divine) identity. Upon seeing the resurrected Jesus, the disciples finally believe that Jesus really is the Son of God and Christ, thereby receiving eternal life. This empowered them to become apostles who spread the Gospel of Jesus all over the Roman Empire. In fact, many Christians in the Roman Empire were martyred while proclaiming Jesus' identity. But they died with glad hearts, because they knew that death had no power over them. (Through His resurrection, Jesus had conquered death.)

Jesus' Resurrection and Great Commission (Jn 20:1-21:25)	
1	Jesus' resurrection (20:1-23)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunday, the day after the Sabbath (20:1, 19) • Mary Magdalene, Peter, and John discover that Jesus' body is missing from the tomb (20:1-10) • Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene (20:11-18) • Jesus appears to His disciples (20:19-23)
2	Jesus appears to Thomas (20:24-29)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomas was not present when Jesus first appeared to the disciples (20:24-25) • A week later, Jesus appears again to Thomas and the rest of the disciples (20:26-29)
3	The purpose of John's Gospel (20:30-31)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To help people believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah (20:30) • So that people may have life in His name (20:31)
4	Jesus appears to seven disciples at the Sea of Galilee (21:1-14)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The miraculous catch of 153 fish (21:11) • This is the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after His resurrection (21:14)
5	Jesus gives Peter a special mission (21:15-23)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Feed my lambs", "Take care of my sheep", "Feed my sheep" (21:15-17) • Jesus predicts Peter's martyrdom (21:18-19)
6	Conclusion (21:24-25)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The testimony recorded in the Book of John is true (21:24) • "If Jesus' every act were written down, not even the whole world would have enough room for the books that would be written" (21:25)

Table 6-20. Jesus' resurrection and the Great Commission

IV. The Relationship between the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John

Some theologians believe that the Gospel of John was written based on the Synoptic gospels. This is to say that John wrote his Gospel using the Synoptic Gospels as his sole source material. This is an incorrect interpretation. The Gospel of John is quite independent from the other Gospels. There are many unique terms and expressions in John's Gospel that don't appear in the Synoptic Gospels. For example, John uses the word "love" (agape) 44 times. He uses the word "truth" 46 times. He uses the word "knowledge" 56 times. And he uses the word "world" 78 times. These words and expressions are not found in the Synoptic gospels.

Of course, on the flipside, there are words and expressions commonly found in the Synoptic Gospels which are missing in the Gospel of John. "The Kingdom of Heaven," "the Kingdom of God," "evil spirits," "power," and "parable", to name a few. Let's look at the differences between the Gospel of John and the Synoptic Gospels using tables.

1. Content that is Only Found in the Book of John

Much of the content of the Gospel of John is not found in the Synoptic gospels. In particular, there are many deeds and teachings of Jesus which are found only in John's Gospel. John largely does not repeat content that is already in the other three Gospels. Rather, he tries to record content that is not present in the other Gospels. Let's look at the 44 items, including six miracles (Table 6-14, numbers 5, 9, 10, 23, 27, 42), found only in the Gospel of John.

	Story	B Passage
1	"The Word became flesh"	Jn 1:1-18
2	John the Baptist confesses that he is not the Messiah	Jn 1:19-28
3	"The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"	Jn 1:29-34
4	Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael as disciples	Jn 1:43-51
5	Jesus turns water into wine	Jn 2:1-11
6	Nicodemus' conversion	Jn 3:1-21
7	John the Baptist testifies about Jesus	Jn 3:22-36
8	Jesus and the Samaritan woman	Jn 4:1-42
9	Jesus heals a royal official's son	Jn 4:43-54
10	Jesus heals a 38 year invalid at Bethesda Pool	Jn 5:1-15
11	Jesus proclaims that He is the Son of God	Jn 5:16-47
12	Jesus declares that He is the bread that came down from heaven	Jn 6:22-59
13	Many disciples desert Jesus	Jn 6:60-71
14	(At the Feast of Tabernacles) Jesus teaches at the Temple	Jn 7:1-36
15	Jesus promises the Holy Spirit	Jn 7:37-39

16	The unbelief of the Jewish people and Jewish leaders	Jn 7:40-53
17	The woman caught in adultery	Jn 8:1-11
18	Jesus declares that He is the light of the world	Jn 8:12-20
19	Jesus declares that He is from the world above	Jn 8:21-30
20	Descendants of Abraham	Jn 8:31-41
21	Children of the Devil	Jn 8:42-47
22	Jesus existed before Abraham was born	Jn 8:48-59
23	Jesus heals a man blind from birth	Jn 9:1-34
24	Spiritual blindness	Jn 9:35-41
25	The Good Shepherd and his sheep	Jn 10:1-21
26	Jesus proclaims again that He is the Son of God	Jn 10:22-42
27	Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead	Jn 11:1-44
28	"A kernel of wheat must die, in order to produce many Seeds"	Jn 12:20-36
29	The Jews don't believe in Jesus	Jn 12:37-50
30	Jesus washes His disciples' feet	Jn 13:1-17
31	Satan enters into Judas Iscariot	Jn 13:18-30
32	"I am the way and the truth and the life"	Jn 14:1-14
33	Jesus promises the Advocate (Paracletos)	Jn 14:15-31
34	The true vine and the branches	Jn 15:1-17
35	Jesus predicts that the disciples will be hated by the World	Jn 15:18-27
36	The ministry of the Holy Spirit	Jn 16:5-15
37	Jesus predicts that the disciples' grief will turn to joy	Jn 16:16-33
38	Jesus' special prayer immediately following the Last Supper	Jn 17:1-26
39	Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene	Jn 20:11-18
40	Jesus appears to His disciples in Jerusalem	Jn 20:19-23
41	Jesus again appears to His disciples, including Thomas	Jn 20:24-29
42	Jesus appears to seven disciples at the Sea of Galilee Peter catches 153 fish	Jn 21:1-14
43	Jesus gives Peter a special mission	Jn 21:15-23
44	The purpose of John's Gospel, Conclusion	Jn 20:30-31

Table 6-21. 44 items that are only recorded in the Book of John

2. Content that is Found in the Synoptic Gospels but not in John

Now, let's look at content that is found in the Synoptic Gospels but not in the Gospel of John. As we discussed in chapter 2, the Gospel of John contains none of the parables that are in the Synoptic Gospels. Also, as to Jesus' healing miracles, nature miracles, and raising of the dead miracles, John records almost none of the miracles that are already in the Synoptic Gospels (Table 6-15). Even apart from parables and miracles, in his Gospel John boldly omits any content that might be repeated from the Synoptic Gospels, for instance, stories regarding Jesus' humanity (Table 6-16). Let's look at specifically what kinds of content matter John left out of his Gospel. (See tables below)

3. Content that is Found in all Four Gospels

There is some content matter that is universally recorded in all Four Gospels. There are a total of 10 such items. Nine of them are important stories that all take place during Jesus' Passion Week. The one remaining item is a miracle: the miracle of 'five loaves and two fish'. Judging from the fact that the authors of the Four Gospels (including John, who usually omitted content already found in the other Gospels) all recorded these ten items, there is a high

probability that these 10 items comprise the core theme of the Four Gospels. Let's now look at these ten items which the authors of the Four Gospels deemed so important (See Table 6-17).

	Miracle	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
1	Healing of a leper	8:2-4	1:40-42	5:12-13	—
2	Healing of the centurion's servant	8:5-13	—	7:1-10	—
3	Healing of Peter's mother-in-law	8:14-15	1:30-31	4:38-39	—
4	Healing two demon-possessed men in Gadarenes	8:28-34	5:1-15	8:26-35	—
5	Healing a paralytic	9:2-7	2:3-12	5:18-25	—
6	Healing the bleeding woman	9:20-22	5:25-34	8:43-48	—
7	Healing two blind men	9:27-31	—	—	—
8	Healing a mute demon-possessed man	9:32-33	—	—	—
9	Healing a man with a withered hand	12:10-13	3:1-5	6:6-10	—
10	Healing a blind and mute demon-possessed man	12:22	—	11:14	—
11	Healing a Canaanite woman's demon-possessed daughter	15:21-28	7:24-30	—	—
12	Healing a demon-possessed boy with seizures	17:14-18	9:17-29	9:38-43	—
13	Healing two blind men at Jericho	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43	—
14	Healing a deaf and mute man	—	7:31-37	—	—
15	Healing a demon-possessed man in the synagogue	—	1:23-26	4:33-35	—
16	Healing a blind man in Bethsaida	—	8:22-26	—	—

17	Healing a crippled woman	—	—	13:11-13	—
18	Healing a man with dropsy	—	—	14:1-4	—
19	Healing ten lepers	—	—	17:11-19	—
20	Healing the high priest's servant	—	—	22:50-51	—
21	Calming the storm	8:23-27	4:37-41	8:22-25	
22	'Seven loaves and two fish' (feeding 4000)	15:32-38	8:1-9	—	—
23	Coin in the fish's mouth	17:24-27	—	—	—
24	Withering of the fig tree	21:18-22	11:12-14, 20-25	—	—
25	Miraculous catch of fish	—	—	5:4-11	—
26	Reviving synagogue leader Jairus' dead Daughter	9:18-19, 23-25	5:22-24, 35-43	8:41-42, 49-56	—
27	Reviving the Widow of Nain's dead son	—	—	7:11-15	—

Table 6-22. Twenty Seven Miracles that are recorded in the Synoptic Gospels but not John

	Story	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
1	John the Baptist's birth	—	—	1:5-25, 57-80	—
2	Jesus' birth and childhood	1:18-2:23	—	1:26-38; 2:1-52	—
3	Jesus' baptism	3:13-17	1:9-11	3:21-22	—
4	Calling of the 12 disciples	10:1-4	3:13-19	6:12-16	—
5	Sermon on the Mount	5:1-7:27	—	6:20-49	—
6	Jesus rebuking the people of Galilee; Jesus' love for Gentiles	11:20-30	—	10:8-16, 21-22	—

7	Jesus rejected by Jewish leaders	12:1-45	2:23-3:6, 20-30; 8:11-12	6:1-11; 11:14-32	—
8	Parables about heaven (kingdom of God)	13:1-52	4:10-20, 26-34	8:4-15; 13:18-21	—
9	Miracle of 'seven loaves and two fish'	15:32-38	8:1-9	—	—
10	Peter's declaration	16:13-20	8:27-30	9:18-21	—
11	The Transfiguration	17:1-8	9:2-13	9:28-36	—
12	Sending out of 70 disciples	—	—	10:1-20	—
13	Parable of the Good Samaritan	—	—	10:29-37	—
14	The cost of discipleship	—	—	14:28-33	—
15	Healing of ten lepers	—	—	17:11-19	—
16	Healing of two blind men at Jericho	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43	—
17	Zacchaeus the tax collector	—	—	19:1-10	—
18	Jesus curses a fig tree	21:18-19	11:12-14		—
19	Jesus' authority is questioned	21:23-27	11:27-33	20:1-8	—
20	"Woes" on the religious leaders	23:1-36	12:38-40	11:37-52	—
21	Discourse on the Mount of Olives	24:1-25:46	13:1-37	21:5-36	—
22	Judas Iscariot's suicide	27:3-10	—	—	—
23	Women watch Jesus' body being placed in the tomb	27:61	15:47	23:55	—
24	Guards are posted at Jesus' tomb	27:66	—	—	—
25	There is a violent earthquake	28:2	—	—	—
26	Guards report everything to the chief priests	28:11-15	—	—	—
27	Two disciples on their way to Emmaus	—	16:12-13	24:13-32	—

28	Jesus appears to eleven disciples in Galilee	28:16-20	16:14	—	—
29	Jesus appears to His disciples in Jerusalem	—	—	24:33-49	—
30	Jesus' ascension	—	16:19	24:50-51	—

Table 6-23. Thirty stories that are recorded in the Synoptic Gospels but John

	Item	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
1	Miracle of 'Five loaves and two fish'	14:15-21	6:35-44	9:12-17	6:5-13
2	Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem	21:1-9	11:1-10	19:28-44	12:12-15
3	The Last Supper	26:17-32	14:12-28	22:7-30	13:21-30
4	Jesus predicts Peter's three denials	26:33-35	14:29-31	22:31-34	13:37-38
5	Jesus is arrested	26:47-56	14:43-50	22:47-53	18:1-11
6	Peter's three denials	26:69-75	14:66-72	22:55-62	18:16-18; 25-27
7	Jesus' testimony before the high priest and Pilate	26:63-66; 27:11-14	14:61-63; 15:1-5	22:66-23:3	18:19-24, 33-37
8	Jesus dies on the cross	27:33-56	15:22-41	23:26-46	19:17-30
9	Joseph of Arimathea buries Jesus' body in a new tomb	27:57-61	15:42-47	23:50-53	19:38-42
10	Jesus' resurrection	28:1-8	16:1-8	24:1-12	20:1-2

Table 6-24. 10 items that are recorded in all Four Gospels

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CHAPTER 7

The Abrahamic Covenant

I. Introduction

The hidden theme that runs through the Four Gospels is "God's will". But what is the "will of God"? It is that the children of God conform themselves to the purpose of God's creation (Isa 43:7, 21). God created us for a reason: to adore Him. God rejoices when His children follow His purpose in creating them. He delights when they honor God and glorify Him with thanksgiving, praise, and worship. And He shares His happiness with His children (Gen 1:31). This way, *agape* love abounds between the Creator and His children. And this *agape* love can then spread to the whole world.

However, the omniscient God knew from even before Creation that His creatures would not conform to His purpose in Creation. That is why He predetermined a plan, from before Creation, to make up for His children's limitations. In accordance with this plan, Jesus came into this world and personally taught us God's purpose in Creation; then, on the cross, He said "It is finished", and breathed His last. Afterward, He resurrected and walked the earth for forty days, during which time He commanded His disciples to spread His message all over the world; He then ascended to Paradise. The Great Commission is Jesus' command to us to teach this "will of God" to people everywhere so that they can obey it.

In terms of content, the Four Gospels mainly deal with Jesus' public ministry: what He did, what He said, what He taught, and what commands He gave His followers. The authors of the Four Gospels all approach this same subject in individual ways. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are the Synoptic gospels; they share a common perspective in that they focus on Jesus' humanity. But the three differ in small ways in terms of the purpose of writing, target audience, content matter, and writing style. On the other hand, the Gospel of John differs significantly from the Synoptic Gospels in that it places far more emphasis on Jesus' divinity.

So, the Four Gospels differ in terms of their respective roles in the Scriptures and also their target audiences. But they have a common clear purpose: to bear testimony to Jesus' having incarnated into this world to teach the children of God the purpose of God's creation. Not only this, the Four Gospels tell us that Jesus' coming was already prophesied in the Old Testament, that Jesus' coming was meticulously planned by God, and that this Jesus is in fact the 2nd person of the Triune God. They also tell us that Jesus will return, and what kinds of things will happen on the earth between Jesus' first coming and second coming. They tell us what kind of path Jesus' beloved disciples must walk in their lives, and what awaits the children of God in heaven when their education/training on earth on the mysteries of God's will is complete.

In fact, at the foundation of everything that Jesus taught and did on the earth, there lie some very profound mysteries about God's plan to save the Gentiles. In this chapter, we will look at how Jesus' miracles, as well as His teachings to His disciples, are relevant to

God's salvation plan for the Gentiles. If someone, after reading the Four Gospels makes the mistake of taking one of Jesus' teachings or deeds and interpreting it outside the context of God's plan to save the Gentiles that will be proof that the reader didn't correctly understand the Gospels.

The number of topics dealt with in the Four Gospels is very great. Indeed, the Four Gospels could be called a series of comprehensive theological texts. While it would be nice to be able to look at every topic in detail, that is simply not possible given the length of this book. Therefore, in this chapter we will concentrate on topics related to the main common theme of the Four Gospels, God's plan of salvation for the Gentiles.

We will look at the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:2-3) which Jesus gave us in the Old Testament. We will also look at exactly how Jesus has been fulfilling that covenant, ever since His first coming to the earth (Mt 1:21; Jn 1:14). This way, we will be able to develop a much deeper, wider, longer, and higher understanding of the Four Gospels (Eph 3:19).

II. The Abrahamic Covenant

God always wanted Gentiles (as well as Jews) to learn His purpose of Creation. Though at first there were only Jewish Christians, this handful of Jews spread the Gospel to the Gentiles. And now, the vast majority of God's children are Gentiles. The fact the Gospel was supposed to flow over from the Jews to the Gentiles is a very important foundational fact for understanding the Four Gospels. All of Jesus' deeds, miracles, and teachings alluded to this fact. However, His Jewish disciples at the time did not realize this. They did not realize that the role of the Jews was simply to act as a bridge by which the Gospel could be passed on to the Gentiles.

Nonetheless, step by step, Jesus used the Jews in their role as a bridge for the transfer of the Gospel. First, Jesus used the Hebrew-speaking Jews of Israel (Acts 6:1), namely His disciples, to transfer the Gospel to the Diaspora Jews (Greek-speaking Jews) living overseas (Acts 6:1). Then, He used the Diaspora Jews as a bridge to transfer the Gospel to the Gentiles. After this, Jesus gradually closed the spiritual eyes of the Jews, so that they could no longer see Jesus.

Then, have the Jews been completely cut off from the Abrahamic blessing (2166 B.C.) that God promised them? Has God forsaken them? Not at all (Rom 11:1). It is just that God is following His preordained order of salvation (Rom 1:16). In accordance with this order, at first Abraham and his physical descendants, i.e. the Jews (both the Hebrew Jews of Israel and the Greek speaking Jews of the

Diaspora) received the Gospel. And next, the Gentiles received the Gospel. Such were the first 40 years of Christian history (30~70 AD). After this, the age of the Christian church began. We are now still in the age of the church, when the fullness of the number of Gentiles to be saved has not yet been met (Rom 11:25). But when this number has been met, the Jews will once again receive the Gospel (Rom 11:26).

1. The Covenant Given Five Times

God has been revealing to us all the way from the Old Testament, from the days of Abraham, that salvation will come to the Gentiles. That was about 2,000 years prior to the coming of Jesus. When Jesus, i.e. Jehovah of the Old Testament (Isa 44:6; Rev 1:8; 22:13), called Abraham (Gen 12:1), He made him an important promise. This promise is the Abrahamic Covenant. God affirmed this covenant a total of five times: three times to Abraham, once to Isaac, and once to Jacob.

Let's look at the three occasions on which God made the covenant with Abraham. In Genesis 12:2-3, Jesus speaks to Abraham, "²I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

These verses are very important. They are at the core of understanding God's planned order for the salvation of the human race. Verse 2 is the blessing promised to the Jews. Missiologists

call it the "Top Line Blessing". It means that God will bless Abraham and all his descendants. In verse 3, God promises that all the peoples on earth (Gentiles) will be blessed. This part of the Abrahamic Covenant is called the "Bottom Line Blessing".

God gives the Abrahamic Covenant for the second time in Genesis 18:18: "Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him." This is a reconfirmation of the first covenant God gave Abraham.

God gives the covenant for the third time in Genesis 22:17-18. In this third covenant, the term "your seed" ("your offspring") appears for the first time. This term is a very important clue for understanding the Abrahamic Covenant. God gave this third promise to Abraham after the incident where Abraham obeyed God's command to sacrifice his son Isaac on top of Mt. Moriah. It goes like this: "I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

God did not give this covenant only to Abraham. Isaac and Jacob also each received the same covenant from God once. In Genesis 26:4, God said to Isaac, "I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed...". And to Isaac's son Jacob, God said in Genesis 28:14, "Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring."

Looking at the content of these five covenants, we can gather that through one of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all peoples on earth will be blessed. This meant that Jesus would be born as a descendant of Abraham, and through Jesus a great many would receive salvation (Gal 3:16).

Recipient	Bible Passage about the Covenant
Abraham (2166~1991 BC)	"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.. All peoples on earth (goim) will be blessed through you" (originally "your seed") (Gen 12:2-3)
	"Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him" (Gen 18:18)
	"Through your offspring (your seed) all nations on earth will be blessed.." (Gen 22:18)
Isaac (2066~1886 BC)	"I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed" (Gen 26:4)
Jacob (2006~1859 BC)	"Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring" (Gen 28:14)

Table 7-1. The Abrahamic Covenant

This prophecy that Jesus would be born as a descendant of Abraham was re-confirmed many times throughout the Bible (Gen 49:8-12; Mic 5:2; Lk 2:4; Rev 5:5). Even in Jesus' genealogy, it is clearly recorded that He is a descendant of Abraham (Mt 1:1-17; Lk 3:23-38).

In conclusion, the “seed” or “offspring” spoken of in the Abrahamic covenant is none other than Jesus. It says that all peoples will be blessed through Jesus. But what is meant by “all peoples”? It means Gentiles (not Jews). How can this be? In order to understand this, we must learn a bit about Hebrew and Greek expressions.

2. ‘Jew’ and ‘Gentile’ in the Original Bible Languages

Compared to other languages, Hebrew and Greek are very specific in the way they classify people. That is, they have a rather well developed “calling system” when it comes to classifying people groups. In Korean, the term “people group” can refer to both Koreans and non-Koreans. Likewise, the terms “people” and “nation” in English can be used to refer to the speaker’s own people group or other people groups. But in Hebrew, different terms are used to refer to the in-group as opposed to the out-group. This is also the case in Greek.

In Hebrew, the term *am* refers to one individual Jew. The plural form of *am*, *ammim*, refers to a group of Jews. Similarly, the term *go* refers to one individual Gentile. And the plural form of *go*, *goim*, refers to a group of Gentiles. (Table 7-1) This bifurcation in the calling system is also seen in the Greek language, the language in which the New Testament was originally written. In the Greek New Testament, one individual Jew is referred to as *laos*, whereas a

group of Jews is called *laoi*. A Gentile individual is referred to as *ethnos*, whereas the plural form *ethne* is used to refer to a group of Gentiles.

In the original Hebrew version of the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12:2-3, the original Hebrew term used for "all peoples" is *goim*. This is surprising. If Jesus had meant to say in the covenant that all peoples, including the Jews, would be blessed through Abraham's seed (offspring), the term used for "all peoples" would have been "*ammim* and *goim*". But, this is not the case. Only *goim* are mentioned. So according to the covenant, only *goim* (the Gentile peoples), will be blessed through the Seed of Abraham, Jesus.

From a Jewish standpoint, this is rather difficult to accept. But it is very much true. When Jesus incarnated into this world as the Savior, only a few Jews accepted Jesus - the great majority of Jews rejected Him. As opposed to this, great numbers of Gentiles (as preordained by God) accepted Jesus as their Savior. So looking at this, we can say that the covenant God made with Abraham 2,000 years before Christ was fulfilled to the letter.

The word "covenant" is a legal term with strong binding power. In the Korean Bible, it is simply translated as 'promise', but that's not what it said in the original language. In the English Bible, it is translated as "covenant". We are speaking of the covenant between God and Abraham here. This covenant was sure to be fulfilled, for it was made by God himself. What is more, the Abrahamic Covenant was a unilateral covenant that God made with Abraham. In other words, it was a covenant based entirely on God's grace.

	Hebrew		Greek	
	Jew	Gentile	Jew	Gentile
Singular	Am	Go	Laos	Ethnos
Plural	Ammim	Goim	Laoi	Ethne

Table 7-2. The words "Jew" and "Gentile" in Hebrew and Greek

3. "All the Peoples" (Panta ta Ethne)

When Jesus was on earth, He personally commanded His disciples to spread the Gospel to the Gentiles (30 AD). The command that He gave His disciples, the Great Commission, was very similar to the Abrahamic Covenant (2166 BC) that He had made 2,000 years earlier. He gave this command at least five times during the 40 days (Acts 1:3) following His resurrection until the time of His ascension. Four of these instances are recorded in the Gospels, and the fifth instance is found in Acts (Mt 28:19, Mk 16:15, Lk 24:47, Jn 20:21, Acts 1:8). Let's look at them in order.

Matthew 28:19, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Mark 16:15, "He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.""

Luke 24:47, "and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

John 20:21, "Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.""

Acts 1:8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

While these five instances of the Great Commission are slightly different in terms of expression, their meaning is the same. If we look at the one in Mt 28:19, we can see that the Great Commission is more specific and detailed than the original Abrahamic covenant. Jesus actually commands His disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations." Now, the New Testament was originally written in Greek. So, let's look at the original Greek expression that was used for "all nations". In Greek, this is *panta ta ethne* (???Greek). *Panta* means "all". *Ta* means "the". And *ethne* means "Gentile nations". (As in Table 7-2, *ethne* is the plural form of *ethnos*, and it means "Gentile people".)

If we put everything together, Jesus' command means, "Go and save many Gentile peoples." Jesus did not say, "Go and convert many Jews." He did not say in Greek, "*panta ta laoi*." Neither did He say, "*panta ta laoi & ethne*." So, He did not mean "both Jews and Gentiles". Jesus' Great Commission is specifically targeted at the Gentiles. Jesus' disciples were to evangelize not the *laoi*, but the *ethne*, the Gentiles.

Ethne refers to gentiles, people who are of a different culture, language, and race than us. Missions is the work of spreading the Gospel to such gentiles, and missionaries are those who are engaged in this work. Followers of Jesus, upon receiving the Gospel, must not remain in their own cultural comfort zones. They must leap over the cultural hurdles and go forth to all the regions

of the world with the Gospel. As Jesus said in Acts 1:8, we must be His witnesses in "all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Jesus' disciples obeyed His command and became martyrs while spreading the Gospel to the Gentiles. They became "kernels of wheat that fell to the ground and died" to produce abundant fruit (Jn 12:24). To this very day, as it has been throughout the 2,000 years of Christian history, only a few faithful Christians are called to be disciples of Jesus who carry out the grassroots work of cross-cultural missions.

4. The Mystery of Christ

The fact that the Gospel had to be passed on from the Jews to the Gentiles is one of the Mysteries of Christ (Mt 13:11; 1 Cor 2:7; Eph 3:4; Rom 16:25-26). According to the Old Testament, the Jews were God's chosen people and had a long love relationship with God. But when it came to the Gospel, the Gospel, instead of staying with the Jews, was to be transferred to the Gentiles. This was hard to understand from the Jewish standpoint. How could Gentiles receive the blessing of knowing Jesus before the Jews?

Apostle Paul himself asked this question. When Paul was spreading the Gospel during His three missionary journeys, only a small minority of Jews accepted the Gospel that he preached. The majority of Jews persecuted Paul and his fellow workers mercilessly. They even tried to kill Paul (Acts 13:4-21:16, 46~57 AD). For Paul, this was very hard to accept. He knew better than anyone that

salvation came entirely through the grace of God (Rom 3:24). The fact that His own people, the Jews, refused to accept the Gospel meant that they would be cut off from the grace of God's salvation.

In Romans chapter 9, we see Paul agonizing over why this has to be so, and also the process by which he receives the answer. In Romans 9:1-3 he says, "I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit—I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race." From Paul's standpoint, this is a very strong protest to Jesus. He basically says, "We, Jews, are God's personally chosen people. Have you forgotten us?" Paul says that He would rather have his name erased from the 'Book of Life' than see His own people not get saved. That is a very bold statement.

In the midst of his protests, Paul receives a realization from Jesus. It was that God had already spoken many times, through the prophets of the Old Testament, that Gentiles would receive the Gospel before the Jews. This was something that had been preordained by God. God had stated this plan all the way back in the Abrahamic Covenant (2166 BC). And six hundred years after Abraham, God had told it to Moses as well. In Deuteronomy 32:20-21, it says, ""I will hide my face from them," He said, "and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful. They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols. I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding.""

Moses received the above message from God at the age of 120, very shortly before he died (Deut 31:16-17), after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. This prophetic message means the following: For 40 years in the wilderness, the Israelites neglected (Deut 32:15) the 'Rock' (1 Cor 10:4), who is Jehovah God (Jesus). They disobeyed and complained to Jesus ten times (Num 14:22). The Israelites deserted and even forgot the Rock who had borne them (Deut 32:18). They worshipped idols and sacrificed to the Devil (Deut 32:17). Due to all their evil, the Israelites angered Jehovah God (Deut 32:16). This is why God said that He would hide His face from them and even reject them (Deut 32:19). Instead, God would raise up a people without understanding, i.e. the Gentiles. And by showing His favor to the Gentiles, God would make the Jews envious (Deut 32:21).

Eternity Past	The Beginning	Before Creation (Jn 1:1)	
	The Beginning	The Creation (Gen 1:1)	
BC	4114	Fall of Adam (Gen 3:6)	
			~500 years
	3492	Enoch (Gen 5:18)	~500 years

	3058	Noah (Gen 5:28-29)	
			~500 years
	2458	Great Flood (Gen 7:6, 11)	
			~500 years
	2166	Abraham (Gen 11:26)	
			~500 years
	1520	Moses (Ex 2:1-2)	
			~500 years
	1040	David	
			~500 years
	850	Age of Prophets (starting with Elijah)	
			~500 years
	605	Daniel	
	450	Age of Prophets (ending with Malachi)	
	4	Birth of Jesus	

Table 7-3. Chronological chart from eternity past to the birth of Jesus

Actually, this fact that the Gentiles would receive salvation before the Jews was a secret hidden since eternity past. But when the time came (Ecc 3:1), God revealed it successively to Abraham, Moses, David (1010~970 BC, Ps 69:22-23), Hosea (755~710 BC, Hos 2:23), and Isaiah (739~680 BC, Isa 1:9; 10:22-23).

Let's now look at these revelations in the Old Testament regarding the order of salvation of Jews and Gentiles, which Jesus also made known to Paul. First, the revelations given to Moses: "I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding" (Deut 32:21; Rom 10:19). "But to this day the Lord has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear" (Deut 29:4; Rom 11:8).

Second, the revelation given to David: "May the table set before them become a snare; may it become retribution and a trap. May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever" (Ps 69:22-23; Rom 11:9-10).

Third, to Hosea: "I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.' I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God' (Hos 2:23; Rom 9:25-26)".

Finally, to Isaiah: "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear, to this very day" (Isaiah 6:9-10; Romans 11:8).

As we can see, many prophets of the Old Testament prophesied that Israel's spiritual eyes would be closed (so that Jews wouldn't be able to see Jesus as Savior of the world). However, it was also prophesied that Israel would one day be restored through a small

minority of Jews who did not close their spiritual eyes. This small minority is called "the remnant" or "stump" (Isa 6:13). Isaiah prophesied that such "remnants" would always remain (Isa 1:9; 10:22-23). And in fulfillment of this prophecy, throughout the Old Testament history of Israel, there remained servants of God who rejected idols and worshipped only Jehovah. And in the New Testament times as well, there have always been a few Jewish followers of Jesus (Rom 11:4-5).

Through these remnants among the Jews, one day Israel as a whole will be restored. That will happen when the full number of Gentiles to be saved (predetermined by God) has been met. In Romans 11:25-26 it says, "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; He will turn godlessness away from Jacob..." This means that when the full number of Gentiles to be saved has been reached, the Jews will no longer remain hard hearted. They will open their spiritual eyes and accept Jesus as God.

The order of salvation can be summarized as follows. (Additional details concerning this will be dealt with in other parts of this book or in other books by the author.)

- ① At first, the Gospel will go to the Hebrew Jews (the Jews of Israel).
- ② Through them, the Gospel will go to the Diaspora (Greek-speaking) Jews.

- ③ Through the Diaspora Jews, the Gospel will go to the Gentiles.
- ④ The Jews will gradually become spiritually blind.
- ⑤ The Gospel will spread to all the Gentiles who are predestined to be saved.
- ⑥ When the full number of Gentiles is almost reached, a small minority of Jews, i.e. the 144,000 Messianic Jews, will open their spiritual eyes.
- ⑦ When the full number of Gentiles to be saved is reached, the rest of the Jews will return to Jesus.

As you can see, this matter of the order of salvation of Jews and Gentiles, as revealed through Paul, is impossible for us to understand rationally. This is not something we can resolve at the level of our knowledge and understanding. Rather, it is an issue that is wholly within the sovereign providence of God (Mt 20:15; Rom 9:10-23). Because this is something we cannot understand with our intellectual power and reasoning, Paul calls it the "Mystery of Christ" (Rom 11:25-26).

5. Paradigm Shift

Among the Four Gospels, the Gospel of Matthew was written with Jewish Christians as the target audience. What did Jesus want to teach the Jews through Matthew's Gospel? The importance of evangelizing the Gentiles. One of the purposes of the Book of Matthew was to change the hearts of Jews toward Gentiles. Without first doing this, God could not have used the Jews to carry

out the Great Commission as He had promised to Abraham.

This was a very paradoxical situation for Jesus' Jewish disciples. It was not as easy as it seems for Jews to follow God's command to spread the Gospel to Gentile peoples (instead of just keeping the Gospel among Jews). It was because for 2,000 years of Old Testament history, God had commanded the Jews not to go near Gentiles (Jn 4:9), not to eat Gentile foods (Gal 2:12), not to intermarry with Gentiles (Deut 7:3; 1 Kings 11:2), not to follow the customs and regulations of the Gentiles (1 Kings 11:4), not to make treaties or covenants with the Gentiles (Deut 7:2; Isa 2:6), and not to allow Gentiles to enter their tabernacle (Jer 51:51). God in fact had told the Jews not to have any relationship with the Gentiles at all (Neh 9:2).

What is more, throughout their history, whenever Israelites repented and consecrated themselves before God, no Gentile country had ever attacked them. Instead, God had struck down the Gentile enemies of Israel and put them to shame. There are many such cases recorded throughout the Old Testament (Isa 2:1-21:24; 1 Kings 11:1 to 2 Kings 25:30). So through their Old Testament history, Jews had been instilled with a sense of ethnocentrism and prejudice toward Gentiles. And they had an innate aversion to Gentiles.

Jesus' twelve disciples, being Jews themselves, also had an ethnocentric mentality. They thought and believed that they were far superior to Gentiles. They believed that the Jews were God's chosen and beloved people. For that reason, it was difficult for them to even consider intermingling with Gentiles. They were very ashamed to so much as eat with Gentiles (Gal 2:12). Throughout

the Four Gospels, whenever Jesus talked to Gentiles, healed Gentiles (Mt 8:1-13), and entered Gentile cities (Mt 15:21), the disciples wondered why, and they found it uncomfortable (Jn 4:9, 27; Mt 15:23).

This ethnocentrism persisted even after Jesus' resurrection and ascension. The Jews even discriminated among themselves. For example, the Hebrew Jews of Israel thought themselves superior to the Diaspora Jews from overseas. During the height of the Church of Jerusalem, the Hebrew Jews in the church discriminated against the Diaspora Jews (Acts 6:1). Though they were fellow Jews, the latter were discriminated against because of their language and cultural differences. And even when the Jerusalem Church came under persecution and the members of the church were all scattered to Syria, Galatia, Pontus, Cappadocia, Bithynia, and Asia Minor, the twelve disciples remained in their place in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). They simply couldn't conceive of leaving Jerusalem to go and live in a Gentile country.

Not even Peter and Paul were free from this issue of ethnocentrism in the beginning. When the Holy Spirit commanded Peter, in a vision, to eat Gentile foods, he did not obey immediately (Acts 10:14), for just this reason. Even Paul, who was predestined from before birth to be an apostle to the Gentiles (Gal 1:15) took a long time to completely overcome the hurdle of ethnocentrism. Though he converted to Christianity in 35 AD, it took him 22 years to finally realize the order of salvation of Gentiles and Jews and to write about it in Romans chapters 9 to 11 (in 57 AD).

Meanwhile, an important event took place. Cornelius the centurion, a Gentile, had accepted Jesus. Cornelius was the captain

of the 'Italian regiment' stationed in Caesarea. By God's command, Cornelius invited Paul to his house, and (also by God's command) Peter went there. When Peter preached the Gospel at Cornelius' house, the gentile Cornelius' family and the soldiers of the Italian regiment were baptized by the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:1-43). The Jewish Christians who witnessed this were amazed that even Gentiles could be baptized by the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:44-46). Indeed, Peter himself was surprised. Peter went straight back to Jerusalem and reported this amazing incident to the Apostles and fellow Christians. However, not many Jews were happy at the news of Gentiles being baptized by the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:18).

The Council of Jerusalem (49 AD), which we read about in Acts chapter 15, provides a good example of how the Jewish Christians felt toward Gentiles. Upon hearing the news from all over of Gentiles converting to Christianity and being anointed by the Holy Spirit, the Jewish Christian leaders were taken aback. The leaders all gathered in Jerusalem to figure out what to do about this, but they could reach no consensus. Now, no one could deny the fact that God was granting salvation to the Gentiles as well as Jews. But when it came to how the Gentile Christians should be led and guided in the faith, there were differing views. There was especially much dispute concerning circumcision (Acts 15:5). There were loud voices calling for Gentiles to be circumcised and required to obey Jewish laws.

Peter's speech in front of the assembly reveals to us the attitudes of Jewish Christians at the time. Acts 15:7-9 reads, "After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the

Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that He accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as He did to us. He did not discriminate between us and them, for He purified their hearts by faith." Why did Peter, the highest leader of the Jerusalem Church, have to defend the Gentiles like this? It is because most Jewish Christians at the time did not respect Gentiles. They did not want to acknowledge the fact that the Gentiles were being granted eternal life through belief in Jesus just the same as Jews.

In order for the disciples to evangelize to the Gentiles, a paradigm shift was needed in their way of thinking. Jesus pushed His disciples to change their way of thinking from a Jewish-centered one to a Gentile-centered one. But this was not an easy task. It was not something that could change overnight; a long time was needed. Indeed, twenty or so years would pass after Jesus' giving the Great Commission and ascending into heaven (Acts 1:9, 30 AD), before the Jewish Christians slowly started to move towards Gentile missions. It was at just this time that Jesus had Matthew write his Gospel (50-52 AD). The other three Gospels followed.

Almost all of Jesus' deeds and teachings during the three years of His public ministry on earth were focused on God's plan to save the Gentiles. However, Jesus' disciples, including Peter, did not realize this. Though they followed Jesus for three years and personally witnessed Jesus' teachings and deeds, at the time they had no idea that all of this was connected to the salvation of Gentiles. It would take fully twenty years for the Gospel of Matthew to come out. Only by then did Jesus' disciples enter into

the stage of understanding with deep conviction that hidden inside all of Jesus' deeds and teachings were God's salvation plan for Gentiles (Abrahamic Covenant, Gen 12:2-3) and His love (John 3:16; Acts 1:8) for them.

III. The Four Gospels' Message Concerning the Salvation of the Gentiles

In the Four Gospels, many of Jesus' teachings deal with the issue of the salvation of the Gentiles. This is because Jesus' disciples eventually had to overcome the cultural barriers and spread the Gospel to the Gentiles of Syria, Turkey and Rome. In order to do that, the disciples' whole mindset needed to be shifted. They needed to move away from Jewish ethnocentrism toward love for the Gentiles.

Jesus slowly transformed His disciples. In all of Jesus' parables, miracles, and displays of power, we can sense Jesus' effort at trying to change His disciples' hearts. It was very much the will of God to change the disciples' way of thinking and teach them to love the Gentiles.

Let us examine, through the following examples cases, how this will of God manifested itself.

1. Jesus' Genealogy

The genealogy of Jesus is found in two places in the Four Gospels: Mathew chapter 1 and Luke chapter 3. The two genealogies are written differently. Matthew's version takes a top to bottom approach. It starts with Abraham, passes through David and his son Solomon (David's fourth son through his eighth wife Bathsheba) (Mt 1:6), and ends with Jesus. This is Jesus' genealogy through his father Joseph's line of descent (Mt 1:16). On the other hand, Luke's version takes a bottom to top approach. It starts at the bottom with Jesus and passes through Mary's father Heli (Lk 3:23), Nathan the third son of Bathsheba (1 Chron 3:5), David, David's ancestors (Lk 3:31), and all the way up to Adam. This is Jesus' genealogy through His mother Mary's line of descent.

Why are the two genealogies written so differently? It is because the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke had different target audiences. The Book of Matthew was written for the Jewish Christian readership. That is why Matthew's genealogy starts with Abraham, the father of the Jews; it focuses on the fact that Jesus is a descendant of Abraham (Mt 1:1). On the other hand, the Gospel of Luke was written for the Gentile Christian readership. So, it presents Jesus as a descendant of Adam, the father of all mankind (Lk 3:38). Luke emphasizes the fact that Jesus is not just the savior of the Jews, but the savior of all mankind, including Gentiles.

God's intent to save the Gentiles is evident even from the fact that there's Gentile blood mixed into Jesus' bloodline. Matthew 1:1 calls Jesus "the son of David, the son of Abraham". From this, the reader may think that Jesus was 100% Jewish. However, closer

scrutiny of his genealogy reveals that Jesus was not 100% Jewish. There are Gentile names in his genealogy. In fact, there are quite a few Gentile women in Jesus' bloodline.

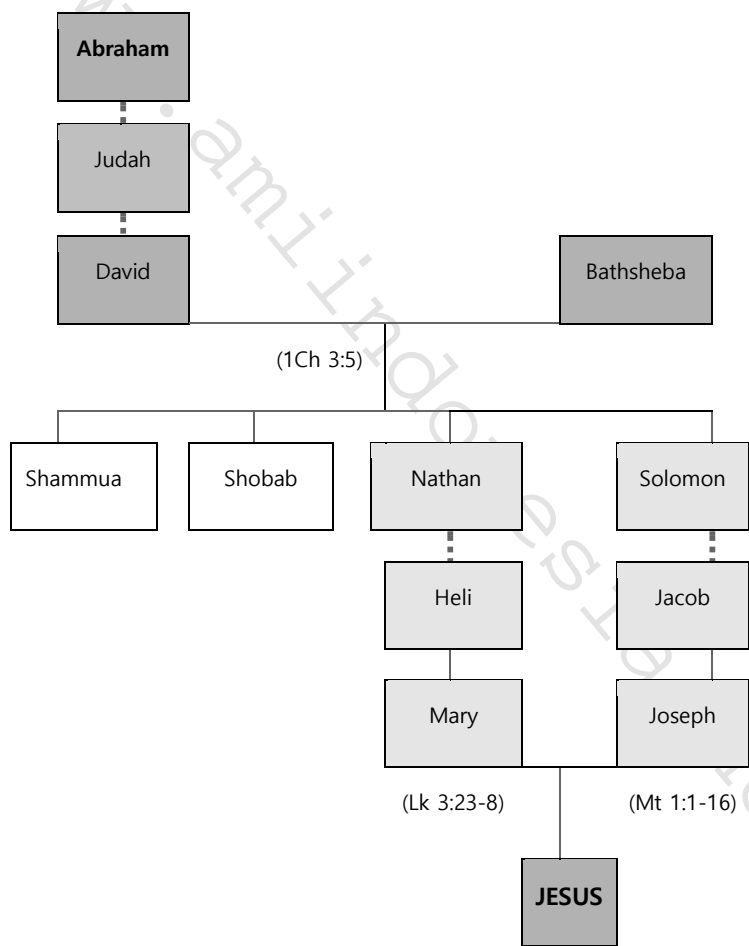


Chart 7-4. Jesus, Descendant of David

Of course, it is problematic to discuss Jesus' lineage just using His human genealogy. This is because Jesus was genetically unrelated to His parents. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Mt 1:18) - God merely borrowed Mary's womb as a surrogate. So, Jesus wasn't in the slightest bit related to His father Joseph and His mother Mary. Joseph and Mary were Jesus' parents only in the legal and social sense. We must keep this in mind when we are looking at Jesus' genealogies in the Four Gospels.

There are two things about Jesus' genealogy that were revolutionary from the Jewish viewpoint. The first thing is that, though this is a genealogy of a Jew, there are five female names in it. These women are Tamar (Mt 1:3), Rahab (Mt 1:5), Ruth (Mt 1:5), Bathsheba (Mt 1:6), and Mary (Mt 1:16). Now, Jews are traditionally patriarchal (Isa 1:1; Jer 1:1; Ezek 1:3; Hos 1:1; Amos 1:1; Mt 10:2-3). Thus, the fact that there were women's names in Jesus' genealogy was something hard for them to accept. It was even more shocking because this wasn't just anyone's genealogy - it was the genealogy of a man who was God himself (!). The inclusion of women in Jesus' genealogy was a violation of Jewish laws and went against Jewish culture and heritage.

But there was an important reason behind this. By challenging the Jewish cultural norm in this manner, Jesus sought to change His disciples' male-centered mindset. The inclusion of women in Jesus' genealogy proves that Jesus died not only for men, but also for women. In fact, in Jesus, there is no difference between men and women; both are equal in Christ. So this is the first message contained in Jesus' genealogy.

Secondly, these five women in Jesus' genealogy mostly are not pure descendants of Abraham; the first four are Gentiles, in fact. All four of them were from the lower strata of their respective societies. They were lowly commoners who weren't respectable in any way. In other words, they were not exactly fit to be the ancestors of Jesus Christ. They were Gentile, unethical, immoral, and potential objects of scorn in their societies. Let's look briefly at each of these women.

The first of them to appear in Jesus' genealogy is Tamar. Tamar was not a descendant of Abraham. She was a Canaanite (Gen 10:6), a descendant of Ham. But surprisingly, an entire chapter (ch. 38) of Genesis is devoted to her story. Tamar was originally a daughter-in-law of Judah, but she later became his wife. How did that happen? If we read Genesis ch. 38, we see that Tamar becomes Judah's wife using quite shady means. Thus, the relationship between Judah and Tamar was quite unacceptable socially and ethically.

The second woman to appear in Jesus' genealogy is Rahab. She too was a Canaanite and originally a prostitute. There is a detailed description of her in Joshua 2:1. Rahab, a prostitute, is one of the female ancestors of Jesus Christ. The fact that a prostitute is among the ancestors of Jesus (God himself) is very shocking.

The third woman is Ruth. Ruth was a Moabite woman (Ruth 1:4). But she became David's grandmother. (This means that even David wasn't a 100% pure descendent of Abraham. David was of mixed heritage; he had Moabite and Canaanite blood in him.) Furthermore, Ruth was a widow from her first marriage. She was therefore from the lower class in society. This hardly made her an acceptable candidate to be an ancestor of Jesus.

The fourth woman to appear in Jesus' genealogy is Bathsheba. Bathsheba was (most likely) a Hittite (2 Sam 11:3; 1 Chron 3:5). (The Hittites were one of the Gentile tribes inhabiting Canaan.) Her father's name, Eliam, actually sounds Jewish. But there is no information on her mother. And more importantly, Bathsheba's original husband was Uriah, a Hittite. Therefore, her heritage is not entirely clear; it's likely that she was of mixed heritage and therefore not of a reputable background in the eyes of Jews. But that was not all. Bathsheba actually had illicit relations with David while her husband was still alive. Worse, David, in order to make Bathsheba his wife, sent her husband Uriah out to the battlefield to die. Therefore, Bathsheba really did not have a reputable background.

But surprisingly, both of Jesus' earthly parents, Mary and Joseph, are descended from Bathsheba. Bathsheba gave birth to four of David's sons: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon (1 Chron 3:5). Joseph is descended from Solomon (Mt 1:6), and Mary is descended from Nathan (Lk 3:23; Lk 3:31).

So for Jews who emphasized pure Jewish heritage and laws/ethics, Jesus' genealogy was something that truly rocked their fixed notions to the core.

	Person	Tribe	Notes
1	Tamar (Mt 1:3)	Canaan (Gen 38:1-6)	Slept with her father-in-law Judah
2	Rahab (Mt 1:5)	Canaan (Josh 2:1)	Prostitute; mother of Boaz
3	Ruth (Mt 1:5)	Moab (Ruth 1:4)	Widow, remarried with Boaz
4	Bathsheba (Mt 1:6)	Hittite (2 Sam 11:3)	Widow, King David's eighth wife

Table 7-5. Gentile women who appear in Jesus Christ's genealogy (Mt 1:1-17)

As a side-note, Jesus' genealogy in the Gospel of Luke is introduced in this manner: "Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when He began His ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli.." (Lk 3:23). This sounds a bit strange. While this is the genealogy of Jesus on His mother Mary's side, Mary herself is not mentioned. Where we should see "Mary, daughter of Heli", we see "Joseph, son of Heli". Why? In order to make it a patriarchal genealogy, Luke substitutes Mary's name with Joseph's. (Joseph was Heli's son-in-law.) But it is still the genealogy of Jesus through Mary, just the same.

So, Matthew recorded the bloodline of Joseph, and Luke recorded the bloodline of Mary. We can see that both of Jesus' parents were descended from King David, fulfilling the prophecy (Mic 5:2; Lk 2:4; Rev 5:5) that the Messiah would come from the line of David. (See Table 7-4)

In conclusion, through Jesus' genealogy, we can definitely sense Jesus' strong will to change His disciples' Jewish-centered,

ethnocentric mindset. Thanks to Jesus' efforts, the 1st Century Jewish Christians were very slowly able to change their way of thinking.

Jesus' teachings against ethnocentrism and cultural exclusivity apply not only to Jewish Christians two millennia ago, but also to Christians everywhere today. Once we have received the Gospel, we must not remain within the boundaries of our own cultural setting. We must take the Gospel and jump over the cultural barriers to spread the Gospel to other nations and peoples. This is the way of God.

2. The Magi (Matthew 2:1-12)

The story of the Magi, which we are all familiar with, appears only in the Book of Matthew. Who were the Magi? The Magi were an ancient priesthood originating from Media (ancient Iran). In the 1st Century kingdom of Persia (also Iran), when appointing a new king, they relied on the prophecy of the Magi. Magi were priests who observed the stars and, among other duties, foretold who the next king would be. In Matthew chapter 2, the Magi arrive in Jerusalem from the east and bring news that a new king has been born in Israel. They came to herald the birth of Jesus Christ and to worship Him.

The fact that the Magi were Gentiles is very important for our discussion. It means that the people who first confessed Jesus as the King of Kings, the ones who worshipped Jesus for the first time, were not Jews but Gentiles. In Matthew 2:1-2 it says, "After Jesus

was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star when it rose and have come to worship him." And in Matthew 2:11, it says, "On coming to the house, they saw the child with His mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh." Looking at these verses, we can say that the Magi, in a way, were the very first Gentile Christians. Because they were the very first Gentiles to officially proclaim that Jesus is the King of Kings.

The Magi are believed to be the ancestors of modern-day Kurds. The Kurds, like the Magi, are descended from the Median Empire, which saw its peak during 7th~6th Century BC. But since that time, the Kurds have been unable to form their own nation. They live scattered in places such as Syria, Iran, and Iraq. Currently, they have a semi-autonomous region of their own in northern Iraq.

Most Kurds are Muslims. But the number of Kurds converting to Christianity is rapidly on the rise. As we saw from the example of the Magi, the Kurdish people are a specially selected people of God who were the very first to proclaim Jesus as the King of Kings. Therefore, I anticipate that God will use them once again in the not-too-distant future to announce Jesus' Second Coming to the whole world.



Map 7-1. The present-day Middle East and its previous place names

So although the Book of Matthew was written for Jewish Christians, it actually begins with a story about Gentiles. Both Jesus' genealogy in chapter 1 and the story of the Magi in chapter 2 emphasize the role of Gentiles. Therefore, 1st Century Jewish Christian readers of the newly written Gospel of Matthew were taken by surprise. "How could Gentiles be the first to be given the privilege of proclaiming Jesus' kingship?", they would ask themselves. It was God's intent that, while searching for the answer to that question, the Jews would come to understand the will of God. In order to accept the fact that God incarnated into this world as a person carrying the blood of Gentile women, and to accept the fact that Gentiles were the first people to worship and revere Jesus as the King of Kings, the Jewish Christians had no choice but to change the way they thought about Gentiles.

The Magi (Facts)	Descriptions
Region of origin	Media (ancient Iran)
Tribe	Kurdish
Occupation	Astronomy/astrology, predicting the next king ("king makers")
Derivative words	magic, magician, etc.

Table 7-6. Facts about the Magi

3. Galilee of the Gentiles

(Matthew 4:15)

Jesus spent most of His three years of public ministry in Galilee. Although the region of Galilee was part of Israel, sometimes in the Bible it is called "Galilee of the Gentiles" (Isa 9:1-2; Mt 4:15). There are many reasons for this. First, Galilee was located in the northern part of Israel and bordered Gentile lands. For that reason, the region was frequented by Gentiles. What is more, in the past Galilee had been occupied by foreign powers such as Assyria (722 BC), and thus there were many Galileans of mixed Gentile and Jewish heritage. So while they were all Jews, compared to the people of the southern region of Judea, the Galileans exhibited much more Gentile influence.

In addition, compared to the region of Judea, there were far fewer people of the privileged class in Galilee. Most Galileans were of the underprivileged/neglected class. They were for the most part poor and uneducated. They were mostly farmers and fishermen. Galilee was a remote place that did not afford one any opportunities to enjoy luxuries of city life such as culture, arts, education, and politics. For this reason, the Jewish elites of Judea shunned to visit it. In the eyes of Judeans, Galilee was no different from a Gentile region. So although the people of Galilee were Jewish, not Gentile, the region was called "Galilee of the Gentiles".

The Bible's portrayal of the region of Galilee undergoes a dynamic change during the course of the narrative. Early on, the "Galilee of the Gentiles" is portrayed very positively; the Bible says

that with Jesus' birth, the people of Galilee have "seen a great light" (Isa 9:1-2; Mt 4:12-17). But later on, there are prophecies warning that the cities of Galilee will be judged more severely than even Sodom and Gomorrah (Mt 11:20-26). So there is a drastic change in the way Jesus speaks of Galilee. If we look at the process by which Jesus' attitude toward Galilee changes, we can find hidden in it an important spiritual meaning relating to the Abrahamic Covenant.

(1) Galilee of the Gentiles Sees a Great Light

At the start of His public ministry, Jesus viewed the region of Galilee very positively. After being tested by the Devil in the wilderness (Mt 4:1-11), Jesus went straight away to Galilee and started His public ministry. In Mt 4:12-17, it is clearly written that Jesus started His ministry in the city of Capernaum in Galilee to bless the "Galilee of the Gentiles", in accordance with the prophecy of Isaiah (Isa 9:1-2).

Let's look at Matthew 4:12-17. "When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He withdrew to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, He went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali - to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles - the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.""

Here, it says that the people living in darkness in the region of Galilee will see a "great light". This means that the Gospel of Jesus will shine forth to the whole world starting from Galilee.

The first thing Jesus did after settling in Capernaum was to proclaim to the Galilee of the Gentiles the Gospel of Heaven. He proclaimed, "Repent. For the Kingdom of God is near!" And He went around the coast of Lake Galilee selecting His disciples (Mt 4:18-22). Then, He started to heal multitudes of sick people (Mt 4:23). News of Jesus healing the sick quickly spread out from the region of Galilee. Countless crowds came to Jesus, not only from Israel but also from the region on the other side of the River Jordan (Mt 4:24-25).

Now, the order of Jesus' deeds is very important. First, He proclaimed to the Galilee of the Gentiles the Gospel of Heaven. And second, He healed the sick. When Jesus started His public ministry, the very first thing He did was to spread the Gospel of Heaven. But we must note that Jesus did not spread the Gospel first to the mainstream Jews of the region of Judea. Rather, He spread it first to the low-class Jews and Gentiles of a "Gentile" region. So from the start of His ministry, Jesus targeted a Gentile region.

Also, there is a deeper meaning behind Jesus' healing of the sick and demon-possessed in Galilee; it wasn't just about healing their bodies. The many sick and demon-possessed symbolize Gentiles as a whole, who had long been under the oppression of the Devil. Thus, Jesus' act of healing them symbolized the spiritual salvation of the Gentiles.

We can perceive Jesus' intent to save the Gentiles even from His

selection of His disciples. Because the process of salvation of the Gentiles would begin in the region of Galilee, Jesus chose His disciples entirely among Galileans, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, who was from Judea. The Galileans, though they were mostly uneducated and held lowly occupations, had the advantage of being more experienced in interacting with Gentiles than the Jews of Judea. Thus, they were the natural choice for Jesus' disciples.

What would have happened if Jesus had instead selected the region of Judea as the center of His ministry? There would probably have been many difficulties in carrying out the plan of salvation of the Gentiles and fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:2-3; Mt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

Judea was home to all the privileged upper-class Jews in Israel: the rich, the highly educated, the powerful, the priests and chief priests, top religious leaders, scholars, etc. These Jews were inclined toward a mono-cultural mindset. They were imbued with Jewish ethnocentrism and believed themselves superior to Gentiles. Hence, they were exclusive and hostile toward Gentiles.

So had Jesus' disciples all been Judean instead of Galilean, while they would have had the advantage of being better educated, their ethnocentrism would probably have ill-suited them for the work of the salvation of the Gentiles.

(2) Galilee of the Gentiles is Rebuked

Not long after the start of Jesus' Gospel ministry in the region of Galilee, we come upon the scene of Jesus rebuking the cities of Galilee. Before, Jesus had prophesied that He would bless these cities with His "great light". But suddenly, Jesus' attitude toward this region changed. Why would the faithful Lord change His mind so easily? In the answer lies an important spiritual meaning concerning God's plan of salvation for the Gentiles.

After selecting His disciples, Jesus healed many sick all over the region of Galilee (Mt ch. 8-9). Then, He gave His twelve disciples the power to cast out demons and heal the sick, so that they too could spread the Gospel of Heaven (Mt ch.10). But despite all the personal attention and special favors Jesus showed this region, the people of Galilee treated the Gospel of Heaven lightly and didn't value it. Even after hearing the Gospel, they did not repent. They did not receive Jesus as their Savior. They were apathetic to Jesus, and they even rejected him.

This is confirmed in Matthew 11:20-24. "20 Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of His miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. 21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have

remained to this day. 24 But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”

Here we see Jesus strongly rebuking the Galilee of the Gentiles. Jesus’ attitude toward the region had clearly changed. Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum were all Israelite cities located on the coast of Lake Galilee. These cities had received the greatest amount of ministry from Jesus. Yet, this region still remained very much “Jewish”.

Though the region of Galilee was much more “Gentile” than Judea, it was still very much a part of Israel and therefore deeply imbued with Jewish mentality. So the people of Galilee were hard-hearted and legalistic. They were unable to see Jesus as the Son of God or Christ. Instead, they were suspicious of Him and even persecuted him.

If we look at verse 23, we see that this was the particularly the case for Capernaum, the city that served as the base of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus said that this proud city would have it more unbearable on the day of judgment than even the long destroyed cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Capernaum was an ambitious city that strove to rise to the sky, but Jesus said that it will be lowered to Hades instead. Why? Because it received the Gospel, yet did not repent. It received the Gospel, but did not believe in Jesus’ identity. It received the Gospel, yet it did not spread the Gospel to Gentile lands. Hence, the searing rebuke from Jesus. On the other hand, Tyre and Sidon was a totally Gentile city (located in present-day Lebanon).

Map 7-2. The unrepentant Galilee
of the Gentile



Jesus said that if He had performed the kinds of miracles and wonders He performed in Galilee in Tyre and Sidon instead, the Gentiles there would have quickly repented and accepted Jesus as the Son of God and the Christ. In other words, this Gentile city was more spiritually awake and receptive of Jesus' identity than the Israelite cities of Chorazin, Capernaum, and Bethsaida.

Here, the cities of Chorazin, Capernaum, and Bethsaida are a "type" ("symbol", Rom 5:14) of Israel as a whole. And Tyre and Sidon symbolizes Gentiles as a whole. Thus, when Jesus said that Tyre and Sidon will have it easier on the day of judgment than the cities of Chorazin, Capernaum, and Bethsaida, He was prophesying that Jews as a whole will refuse to accept Jesus, whereas the Gentiles will open their hearts and accept Jesus.

In reality, Jesus' heart was always turned toward the Gentile cities: His goal was to accomplish the plan of salvation He had shown Abraham. The reason He selected Galilee as the base for His ministry was that Galilee bordered Gentile regions and therefore could have served as an effective bridge in carrying out God's plan of salvation for the Gentiles. But in the end, Galilee was still very much a part of Israel. And Galileans were very much steeped in Jewish ethnocentrism. Ditto for the eleven disciples of Jesus who were from Galilee. For this reason, the disciples normally avoided to even speak with Gentiles. In fact, they didn't want to interact with Gentiles in any way (Deut 7:2-3; 1 Kings 11:2-4; Isa 2:6; Jer 51:51; Jn 4:9; Gal 2:12). It was only a matter of time before they would experience serious cultural discomfort, as they tried to carry out Jesus' Great Commission.

But this was God's will. All of this was a sign that God would

eventually have to accomplish His salvation plan not through the Jews, but through the Gentiles. In the end, the Gentiles would receive salvation before the Jews. The Gentiles would precede the Jews in taking an interest in and obeying God's Purpose in Creation, the Great Commandment, and the Great Commission.

Thus, the Jews were destined to act as mere bridges for the transfer of God's will to the Gentiles. After that, the Jews would gradually close their spiritual eyes to the Gospel. Jesus continually tried to make His disciples aware of this fact. But it took them a long time to understand it.

(3) The Father's Will

After rebuking Galilee, Jesus prayed to God the Father. "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do." (Mt 11:25-26) The disciples heard the prayer. This prayer is very profound in meaning. In the prayer, "the wise and learned" are Jews, whereas "the children" are the Gentiles. So Jesus is thanking the Father for hiding the Gospel from the Jews and revealing it to the Gentiles. This was Jesus' own confession. This meant that it was God's will and plan that the Jews would become spiritually blind and reject Jesus, whereas the Gentiles would accept the Gospel.

Jesus said something similar to this earlier in chapter ten, when He was sending out His disciples. Jesus prophesied that the Jews would not accept the Gospel. He said that the disciples would be hated, rejected, and persecuted by the Jews for spreading the

Gospel. And that the Jews' rejection of the Gospel would open up the opportunity for the Gospel to spread to the Gentiles. It says in Matthew 10:16-18, "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles." So, Jesus was sending out His disciples to heal the sick, cast out demons, spread His name throughout all Israel, starting with the cities of Chorazin, Capernaum, and Bethsaida. But Jesus was telling them that most Jews would reject the Gospel, whereas the Gentiles would be receptive to it.

Jesus continues in Matthew 10:22-23, "You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes." These verses are a bit strange. Although Jesus was right there with His disciples when He said this, He speaks as if He had not come into the world yet. He speaks in the future tense: "before the Son of Man comes." There is only one way to interpret this - Jesus was speaking of His Second Coming, which would take place 2,000 years in the future. So, this was a prophesy. The phrase, "you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes" meant that Jesus would return even before all the Jews had received the Gospel. In other words, by the time of Jesus' Second Coming, only *some* of the Jews will have been evangelized, not all of them.

So from this, we can discern the order of salvation of mankind.

First, Jesus' disciples will travel all over Israel endeavoring to spread the Gospel. But the Jews will not accept the Gospel; they will instead persecute the disciples. As a result, the disciples will no longer be able to stay in Israel - they will be forced to go over to Gentile lands. This will bring about the phenomenon of the Gentiles being successfully evangelized before the Jews. Then, after much time passes and the number of Gentiles predestined to be saved starts to be filled, a few Jews will open their spiritual eyes and come to believe in Jesus. The Second Coming of Jesus will take place at this time.

Therefore, our mission today as Christians is to evangelize as many Gentiles as possible - to fill up the preordained number of Gentiles to be saved. The number of Messianic Jews (eventually reaching a prophesied mark of 144,000) (Rev 7:1-8), will fill up commensurately with the rate at which the number of Gentiles is being filled. Then finally, when the Gentile harvest is complete, the rest of the Jews will be saved (Rom 11:25-26).

Jesus is the Lord of history (Mt 28:18; Jn 17:2) and the Alpha and the Omega (Isa 44:6; Rev 1:8; 22:13). At the end, the cities of Chorazin, Capernaum, and Bethsaida could not but become hard of heart, because it was God's will to grant salvation first to the Gentiles. This was just Jesus' sovereign providence. We must remember that this is the very same Jesus who previously hardened the hearts of Pharaoh (Ex 4:21; 7:3), the Canaanites (Josh 11:20), and Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 43:10), for the sake of accomplishing His will.

So although Jesus' disciples endeavored hard in the cities of Israel to spread the Gospel to the Jews, since Jesus had predestined

the Jews to become hard of heart, the disciples only wound up being persecuted by the Jews. And due to this persecution,, it was only a matter of time before the disciples had to leave the Galilee of the Gentiles and head for Tyre and Sidon and beyond – they ended up spreading the Gospel in true Gentile lands.

4. The Faith of the Gentile Centurion

(Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10)

In the story of Jesus' meeting with the Roman centurion, we can again see Jesus' great love for the Gentiles (Mt 8:5-13). A centurion was a commander in the Roman army in charge of 100 soldiers. The centurion who had been waiting for Jesus in Capernaum was a complete Gentile. He was in fact someone pre-selected by God to appear in this scene as a special guest actor to teach Jesus' disciples and 1st Century Christians about the Abrahamic Covenant and the God's salvation plan for the Gentiles.

The Roman centurion, upon meeting Jesus, begs Him to heal his servant who is paralyzed. Jesus gladly agrees, and offers to go to the centurion's house to heal the servant. But then, the centurion says something remarkable to Jesus. "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." (Mt 8:8-9)

This was a very surprising and powerful confession of faith concerning Jesus' sovereignty (Mt 20:15; Rom 9:10-23). The centurion made this confession in front of many, including the disciples, who were observing and listening to the conversation between himself and Jesus. Jesus showed surprise at the centurion's faith and praised him. It says in Matthew 8:10, "When Jesus heard this, He was amazed and said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith." Jesus said this because among the Jews at the time, no one had this kind of faith. In other words, this Gentile Roman soldier, whom the Jews disdained, had greater faith than any of the Jews.

Through scenes such as this, Jesus showed His disciples little by little just how much He loves the Gentiles. And He hinted that the Gentiles would come to understand Jesus' identity and accept Him before the Jews did.

Then, in Matthew 8:11-12, Jesus goes on to say something peculiar. "I say to you that many [Gentiles] will come from the east and the west and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom [the Jews] will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Here, "many from east and west" refers to a great multitude of Gentiles. Jesus says that the Gentiles who believe in Jesus as the Son of God and Christ will feast together in heaven with Jews such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But the original "subjects of the kingdom," i.e. the Jews who don't believe in Jesus' identity, will be unable to attend the feast. This is a prophesy that after the destruction of Israel in 70 AD, the spiritual eyes of Jews will be completely closed and they will no

longer accept Jesus; on the other hand, the Gentiles will open their spiritual eyes and accept Jesus as the Son of God, Christ and Savior.

Through His conversation with the centurion, Jesus praises a Gentile's faith in front of His disciples and other Jews. He tells them that Gentiles who believe in Him will go to heaven. Then, He goes on to teach the disciples about the Abrahamic Covenant. That is, He uses the centurion to reveal the big picture about God's plan of salvation. Unless we recognize this very important fact, we will be confined to interpreting this story of Jesus' healing the centurion's servant only in a very rudimentary, superficial way – we will come away from the story merely thinking, "Jesus is a great healer who performs great miracles and wonders. If we diligently pray to Him and plead before him, He will heal our illnesses too!" Such is only a skin-deep interpretation of the story. While it is true that Jesus can heal our bodily illnesses, this is very minor in importance compared to the Abrahamic Covenant.

Therefore, the crux of the story of the centurion is not the healing. It is rather the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:2-3). It is God's plan of salvation for the Gentiles. It is Jesus' Great Commission (Mt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). And it's not just this one incident - almost all the miracles and healings that Jesus performed during the course of His public ministry have at their center the Abrahamic Covenant. Why? Because the very reason Jesus came into this world was to fulfill this promise.

So no matter what part of the Bible we are reading or studying, there is no getting away from the Abrahamic Covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant is the main theme of the Bible; it is the great linchpin that links the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

5. The Faith of the Canaanite Woman (Matthew 15:21-28)

The story of the (Gentile) Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:21-28 is also truly remarkable.

²¹ Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²² A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly." ²³ Jesus did not answer a word. So His disciples came to Him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." ²⁴ He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." ²⁵ The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. ²⁶ He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." ²⁷ "Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." ²⁸ Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment."

At this time, Jesus was in Tyre and Sidon. (Tyre and Sidon was a coastal city located in present-day Lebanon.) Though it was a Gentile region, Jesus was fond of it, much more so than the Israelite cities of Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin (Mt 11:20-24). The reason Jesus visited Tyre and Sidon was to show His disciples His love for the Gentiles and to teach them about the Abrahamic Covenant, i.e. God's great plan of salvation. Jesus wanted to teach

His disciples who would be the first to be saved, who would be the second, and who would take center stage at the end.

Now, Jesus definitely noticed the Canaanite woman who was loudly begging Him to heal her demon-possessed daughter. However, in verse 23, Jesus maintains His silence, not saying a word in return. He ignored the woman, as if He was uninterested in her. Meanwhile, His disciples came to Him and asked Him to send this noisy woman away. If we just look at this one verse 23, it seems as though Jesus, like His disciples, had no love for the Gentiles.

Not only that, in verse 24, Jesus says something quite harsh to the woman. He says something along the lines of, "The Father sent me to save the Israelites. I have no interest in Gentiles like you. You are not my people." Hearing this, the disciples must have felt good in their hearts. They must have felt a feeling of camaraderie with their master, thinking that He too was just as exclusive toward the Gentiles as they. Now, in actuality, nothing could have been further from the truth. But Jesus acted out the scene this way and led His disciples into thinking what they were thinking, in order to teach them something.

In verse 25, we see that the Canaanite woman was not cowed by Jesus and His disciples' apparent coldness towards her. She continues to plead, saying, "Please help me. My daughter is demon-possessed!" This was a desperate cry of a mother who wanted to save her beloved daughter. But, Jesus answers her with even harsher words. In verse 26, He says to her that "it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." By children, Jesus meant the Jews. And by dogs, Jesus meant the Gentiles (Mt 7:6; 1 Peter 2:22).

Unbelievably, Jesus told the woman in her face that she and the rest of the Gentiles were dogs. This is so unlike the Jesus we know. But He had something special hidden up His sleeve.

In verse 27, the Canaanite woman cries out to Jesus again. She says, "Yes it is, Lord. Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Now this was exactly what Jesus had been waiting to hear from the woman. He had maintained His outwardly cold attitude toward her in order to hear just this. What the Canaanite woman said caused a deep disturbance in the hearts of Jesus' disciples. The desperate cry of this lowly Gentile woman, whom the disciples had viewed as less than human, was persuasive and moved the disciples' hearts.

Not missing a moment, as soon as the woman had said this, Jesus showed her His true heart. In verse 28, Jesus says to her, "Woman, great is your faith!" Jesus at last praises the Canaanite woman for her faith. Although a lowly woman of Gentile birth, she had an unshakable faith that Jesus was the Son of God, the Christ, and the Savior. It was due precisely to her strong faith that she did not stop beseeching Jesus despite the cold shoulder from Jesus and the disciples.

So this is how the story played out on the surface. But, there is another layer to the story.

The story mentions "bread crumbs". It is not a whole bread, but pieces of it. What does it mean?

Here, the bread symbolizes the Gospel, which was first given to Jews. This bread was then separated into many pieces and eventually the crumbs went to the Gentiles.

Jesus said many times that He is the "living bread", the "true

bread from Heaven", and the "bread of God" (Jn 6:32-59). The bread is therefore representative of Jesus and His Gospel.

When the Gentile woman was begging Jesus for crumbs of bread, what she was really asking for was the Gospel, which was promised to the Gentiles as well as Jews, through the Abrahamic Covenant. She was begging for even one morsel of the Gospel bread that had first been given to God's Old Testament children, i.e. the Jews.

In the end, Jesus did not praise the Canaanite woman just for having the faith that Jesus would heal her daughter. There was more to His praise than that; there was a much larger spiritual meaning. Jesus praised the Canaanite woman because, in accordance with God's will, she had revealed the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:2-3) and Jesus' Great Commission (Mt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8), i.e. God's plan of salvation for the Gentiles.

The disciples who watched the scene unfold fell into silence. They could not say anything or protest in any way. This story in Matthew chapter 15 took place at around the midpoint of Jesus' three years of public ministry. We can see that even by this time, the disciples' attitude towards Gentiles remained mostly negative (Mt 15:23). Thus, Jesus used this incident with the Canaanite woman to give the disciples a powerful lesson about God's love for the Gentiles. Jesus was trying to gradually change their hearts.

	Description
Persons involved	Jesus and the disciples, the Canaanite woman
Time	Around the middle of Jesus' public ministry
Place	Tyre and Sidon
What happens	The Canaanite woman's daughter is healed
How	Jesus: "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs"
	Canaanite woman: "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table"
Purpose	To change the disciples' negative attitude toward Gentiles
	To teach them about the Abrahamic Covenant

Table 7-7. Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman and its purpose (Mt 15:21-28)

6. The Last shall be First ... (Matthew 20:1-16)

"The Last Shall be First" is an often-quoted verse among Christians. This comes from Jesus' parable of the workers in the vineyard, in Matthew 20:1-16.

""¹ For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ² He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. ³ "About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing

nothing. ⁴He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' ⁵So they went. "He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. ⁶About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' ⁷"'Because no one has hired us,' they answered. "He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.' ⁸"When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.' ⁹"The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. ¹⁰So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. ¹¹When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ¹²'These who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.' ¹³"But he answered one of them, 'I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius?' ¹⁴Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' ¹⁶"So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Here, the owner of the vineyard is Jesus. The vineyard is this world, the "harvest field" of the Gospel. The workers who were

hired first are the Jews. The workers who were hired later are Gentile Christians. The surprising thing here is that the workers hired first and the workers hired later are promised the same reward. This means that Jews and Gentiles are equal before God.

Now, the problem is that the "first" can become the "last". In the text, the workers who were hired first bring the anger of the vineyard owner on themselves by complaining that his payment of wages is unfair. That is what prompts the reply from the owner that "the last will be first and the first will be the last".

The Jews (symbolized by the workers who were hired first), were the *first* chosen people of God. However, they rejected Jesus and impeded Jesus in carrying out His mission of bringing salvation to the world. They even nailed Jesus to the cross. They did not realize that Jesus is the Son of God, Christ, and Savior, and they did not accept him. Thus, they became the *last*.

The message of this parable is that Gentiles will receive salvation before the Jews. But unfortunately, many Christians are not able to interpret the parable at this level. They simply take the parable as a morality lesson to be applied to daily life. They do not realize that the focus of all of Jesus' teachings in the Four Gospels is on the relationship of Gentiles and Jews vis-a-vis salvation, i.e. the fact that Gentiles will be saved before the Jews. For instance, characters in the Four Gospels such as the 'Prodigal Son' (Lk 15:11-32) and Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10) all symbolize Gentiles. Therefore, when we read the Gospels, we always have to keep in mind God's will, which is to bring salvation to the Gentiles.

7. Jesus' Lessons on the Tuesday of Passion Week

Jesus gave many sermons during the week leading up to His crucifixion. On the first day of that week, Sunday, He entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey. This day has come to be called Palm Sunday (Mt 21:1-17; Mk 11:1-11; Lk 19:28-44). On the next day, Monday, He cursed a fig tree (Mt 21:18-22; Mk 11:12-19; Lk 19:45-48), which symbolized Israel (Jer 24:1-5). On Tuesday, He lectured on 12 topics. These lectures take up a large portion of the Gospels (Matthew 21:23~25:46; Mark 11:20~13:37; Luke 20:1-38).

Jesus' teachings on the Tuesday of Passion Week can be divided into 12 lessons (Table 7-8). The 11th and 12th are famous lessons about the signs of the End Times. Some of the lessons are on the topic of the Abrahamic Covenant, for instance, the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th lessons. They are respectively 'the Parable of the Two Sons,' 'the Parable of the Wicked Tenants,' and 'the Parable of the Wedding Banquet' - we will take a close look at them. Jesus used these three parables to teach His disciples about the will of God regarding the Jews and Gentiles. Therefore, it's imperative that we understand the Mystery of Christ hidden in them.

Lesson	Title	Description	Bible Passage
1	Jesus' authority is questioned	Jesus teaches about His identity	Mt 21:23-27; Mk 11:27-33; Lk 20:1-8
2	Parable of the Two Sons	God's plan for the salvation of Jews and Gentiles	Mt 21:28-32
3	Parable of the Wicked Tenants	God's plan for the salvation of Jews and Gentiles	Mt 21:33-46; Mk 12:1-12; Lk 20:9-19
4	Parable of the Wedding Banquet	The marriage supper of the Lamb (the Rapture), the relationship between Jews and Gentiles	Mt 22:1-14; Lk 14:16-24
5	Giving to Caesar and giving to God	"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's"	Mt 22:15-22; Mk 12:13-17; Lk 20:20-26
6	Debate concerning the resurrection	Jesus teaches about the resurrection	Mt 22:23-33; Mk 12:18-27; Lk 20:27-40
7	The Great Commandment	Horizontal commandment and vertical commandment	Mt 22:34-40; Mk 12:28-34; Lk 10:25-29
8	The relationship between Jesus Christ and David	Jesus is a descendant of David, Jesus is David's Lord	Mt 22:41-46; Mk 12:35-37; Lk 20:41-44
9	Doctrine of Christian leadership	Jesus is the only Lord	Mt 23:1-12; Mk 12:38-40; Lk 20:45-47
10	"Seven woes" on the religious leaders	The hypocrisy of the teachers of the law and Pharisees	Mt 23:13-36

11	Prophecy about the destruction of the Temple and the emergence of Messianic Jews	Signs of the last days of Israel	Mt 23:37-24:2; Mk 13:1-2
12	Discourse of the Mount of Olives	Signs of the End Times, Seven parables about the Rapture	Mt 24:3-25:46; Mk 13:3-37; Lk 21:5-38

Table 7-8. Jesus' twelve lessons on the Tuesday of Passion Week

(1) The Parable of the Two Sons

(Lesson 2, Matthew 21:28-32)

The Parable of the Two Sons is a message concerning the Abrahamic Covenant. It appears in Matthew 21:28-32.

²⁸ "What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' ²⁹ "'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ "Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. ³¹ "Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³² For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him."

Here, Jews are symbolized by the second son. Gentiles are symbolized by the first son, the tax collectors, and the prostitutes.

The Jews, in the Old Testament times, pledged allegiance to God and promised to obey God countless times. But time and again they broke their word and abandoned God.

Even when they received the Gospel, they did not obey it. They did not go into the vineyard (the world) to spread the Gospel - they did not take part in the Gospel harvest.

In contrast, the Gentiles were originally disobedient to God. But when they received the Gospel, they repented and jumped into the work of spreading the Gospel of Heaven.

In contrast, when the father in the parable (Jesus) asks the first son to go into the vineyard, at first he refuses. But later, he repents and goes to work in the Gospel harvest field. In other words, the Gentiles, symbolized by the first son, the tax collectors and the prostitutes, were originally disobedient to God. But, later they repent and jump into the work of spreading the Gospel of Heaven.

Jesus asks who among these two sons obeyed the will of their father. Of course, it is the son who went to work in the vineyard, i.e. the Gentiles, who obeyed Jesus' Great Commission (Mt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8) and took part in God's plan to save the Gentiles.

This is why Jesus says that the Gentiles, tax collectors, and prostitutes will enter heaven before the Jews. This prophecy of Jesus has actually been borne out in Christian history from the 1st through the 20th centuries. All through that time, the Jews' spiritual eyes have remained closed, and they have not accepted

Jesus. The Gospel Harvest has been taking place solely among the Gentiles. Thus, the prophecy given to Moses in Deuteronomy 32:20-21 has been fulfilled.

By the way, there are a number of expressions symbolizing the Gentiles that appear in the Four Gospels. They include "dog", "swine", "tax collector", "prostitute", "child", and "foolish people". Most of these expressions are derogatory and offensive. They are inappropriate words which were used only to refer to people of the lowest/most despised classes. On the other hand, the Jews are symbolized by expressions such as the "chosen people", the "wise people", the "children of God", "beloved children of God", "faithful children", etc. Please pay attention to these terms which are used to symbolize the Gentiles and Jews. Doing so will greatly aid in understanding the meaning of the Four Gospels.

Father	"Go and work today in the vineyard"	
	First Son	Second Son
Reply	"I will not"	"I will"
Action	Repents and goes	Does not go
Symbolizes	Tax collectors, prostitutes	You
Meaning	Gentiles	Jews
	Take part in the Gospel Harvest Enter the Kingdom of God first	Do not take part in the Gospel Harvest

Table 7-9. The parable of the Two Sons, and its meaning
(Mt 21:28-32)

(2) The Parable of the Wicked Vineyard

Tenants (Lesson 3, Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19)

The Parable of the Wicked Tenants illustrates the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12:2-3 in a more detailed and explicit manner. It appears in Matthew 21:33-46.

³³ "Listen to another parable: There was a landowner [God the Father] who planted a vineyard [this world]. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers [the Jews] and moved to another place. ³⁴ When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants [the Old Testament prophets] to the tenants [the Jews] to collect his fruit. ³⁵ "The tenants seized his servants [the Old Testament prophets]; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. ³⁶ Then he sent other servants [more Old Testament prophets] to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. ³⁷ Last of all, he sent his son [Jesus] to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. ³⁸ "But when the tenants [the Jews] saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' ³⁹ So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him [Jesus' atoning death].

⁴⁰ "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" ⁴¹ "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants [the gentiles], who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time." ⁴² Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone [Jesus, Ps 118:22; 1 Pet 2:7]; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? ⁴³ "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you [the Jews] and given to a people [the Gentiles] who will produce its fruit. ⁴⁴ Anyone [the Jews] who falls on this stone [Jesus] will be broken to pieces; anyone [the Jews] on whom it [Jesus] falls will be crushed [the destruction of Israel in 70 AD]." ⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew He was talking about them.."

In the parable, the vineyard owner is God the Father. The vineyard is this world, which must be harvested for God. The tenant farmers symbolize the Jews; specifically, Jews of the Old Testament

The "fruit" in verse 34 is Jesus. To say that the "harvest time was near" means that Jesus' first coming was near. The servants sent by the vineyard owner to collect the fruit are the prophets of the Old Testament. To say that the vineyard owner sent his servants to the tenant farmers to collect the harvested fruit from them means that God sent the Jews prophets to prepare them to receive Jesus. But, according to verse 35, these tenants stoned the vineyard owner's

servants to death. This means that the Jews persecuted and stoned to death the prophets who proclaimed the first coming of Jesus.

In verse 37, the vineyard owner finally sends his own son. In other words, God the Father sent his own son Jesus Christ. But, not only do the tenants fail to respect the vineyard owner's son, they chase him outside and kill him. This symbolizes Jesus' crucifixion. So in his parable, Jesus was not only talking about what happened in the Old Testament; He was also hinting at events that were to occur in the near future. Remember that Jesus preached this message during His Passion Week. A few days hence, He would be crucified at the hands of the Jews.

The "other tenants" in verse 41 are the Gentiles. To say that the "vineyard owner will rent his vineyard to other tenants" means that the work of spreading salvation would be transferred from the Jews to the Gentiles.

In verse 42, Jesus quotes a verse from the Old Testament book of Psalms. He says, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone (Ps 118:22)." In this Old Testament verse, it is already prophesied that the Jews will reject Jesus while the Gentiles will accept him. Here, the "stone" is Jesus, and the "builders" are the Jews. So Jesus, whom the Jews rejected, became the cornerstone of the New Testament Christian churches (1 Pet 2:7). This was in fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. This is yet another confirmation that all the teachings in the Bible are focused on the Abrahamic Covenant and God's great plan of salvation.

The Abrahamic Covenant is all about missions. It calls us spread the Gospel to people of other cultures, especially to unreached people groups. We must therefore obey this call. Christians exist

for this purpose. Churches exist for this purpose. Christians are sanctified for this purpose. This is the Christians' purpose for success in life. When we obey this purpose of God, we will enjoy the true joy that comes from God.

	Symbol	Meaning
1	Landowner	God the Father
2	Vineyard	This world (that needs to be harvested)
3	Tenants	Jews
4	Servants	Old Testament prophets
5	Landowner's Son	Jesus Christ
6	Harvest time	Jesus' first coming
7	Time when the landowner returns	Jesus' second coming
8	"Other tenants"	Gentiles
9	The stone that the builders rejected	Jesus, who the Jews rejected
10	The cornerstone	Jesus, who is the cornerstone of New Testament churches

Table 7-10. The meaning of the Parable of the Wicked Tenants
(Mt 21:33-46)

(3) The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

(Lesson 4, Matthew 22:1-14)

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet is along the same lines as

the previous parables we've looked at, but it stands out in that it mentions the Rapture. The Parable of the Two Sons (Mt 21:28-32), the Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mt 21:33-46), and the Parable of the Wedding Banquet (Mt 22:1-14) are not separate - they deal with the same subject and ideas. They only vary in the way of expression.

According to Matthew 22:1-14, "Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying:

² "The kingdom of heaven is like a king [God the Father] who prepared a wedding banquet for His son [Jesus]. ³ He sent His servants [the Jewish prophets] to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. ⁴ "Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.' ⁵ "But they [the Jews] paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. ⁶ The rest seized his servants [the prophets], mistreated them and killed them. ⁷ The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. ⁸ "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. ⁹ So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone [the gentiles] you find.' ¹⁰ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people [the gentiles] they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. ¹¹ "But

when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ¹² He asked, 'How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?' The man was speechless. ¹³ "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' ¹⁴ "For many are invited, but few are chosen."

In this parable, Jesus speaks of his "brides" who will take part in the Wedding feast that will take place at Jesus' Second Coming. (that is, those who will be raptured at Jesus' Second Coming)

In verses 3-4, the King sends his servants to summon the invited guests to the Wedding Feast. The invited guests here symbolize Jews. God sent the Jews his prophets in the Old Testament times, and Jesus' disciples in the New Testament times, to tell them to accept Jesus Christ. But the Jews refused. The Jews, due to their spiritual blindness, would not be able to enter into the Gospel of Jesus, even though they were invited. Rather, they would persecute and kill the servants who were sent to them to proclaim the Gospel. That is why in verse 7 the King in anger sends his army to annihilate the ones who killed his servants.

Then in verse 9, the king commands his servants to go into the streets and invite anyone they can find to the wedding feast. Here, "anyone in the streets" means Gentiles. Gentiles who previously had been ineligible to enter the wedding feast now had their chance; the Gospel began to be spread to Gentiles and great numbers of Gentiles came into the Christian community.

However, the saved Gentile Christians will fall into two categories. Those dressed in fine wedding garments (Rev 19:8) and those not wearing wedding garments (Mt 22:11). Now, both groups are God's children. But the Gentile Christians not wearing wedding garments will not get to participate in the wedding feast. Rather, they will weep bitterly and lament in the outer darkness, meaning the 7-Year Tribulation (Mt 22:11-13). On the other hand, the few who are chosen as Jesus' brides (Mt 22:14) will be raptured away to take part in the wedding feast. These are the "blessed ones" (Rev 19:9). In His Olivet Discourse (Mt 24:37-25:46), Jesus uses seven parables to describe what it will be like for the two types of Christians (i.e. those who will be raptured and those who won't be raptured) at the time of the Rapture.

So we've looked at the case of Gentile Christians. But what will happen to Jewish Christians (Messianic Jews, Rev 7:1-8)? Being Jews, they will not be able participate in the Wedding Feast. Rather, they will have to go through the 7-Year Tribulation. Most likely, they will be martyred while endeavoring to evangelize their fellow Jews. Then, after that 7-year period, when Jesus touches down on the surface of the earth, they will rule as kings during the Millennial Kingdom (Rev 20:6) along with the Gentile Christians who participated in the Wedding Feast. Their ruler-ship as kings will continue into the New Heaven and New Earth after the Millennial Kingdom ends (Rev 21:24).

Thus, through the Parable of the Wedding Feast, Jesus prophesies concerning the relationship between Jews and Gentile Christians both preceding and succeeding His Second Coming.

	Symbol	Meaning
1	King	God the Father
2	King's son	Jesus
3	Servants	Jewish prophets
4	Wedding banquet	The Gospel and salvation, The Rapture (Parousia)
5	Those who rejected the wedding invitation	Jews
6	The burning of the city	Fall of Israel in 70 AD
7	All the people from the streets	Gentiles
8	Ones who are invited	The many Gentile Christians
9	Ones dressed in wedding clothes	Christians who will be "raptured"
10	Ones not dressed in wedding clothes	Christians who will not be "raptured"

Table 7-11. The meaning of the Parable of the Wedding Banquet
(Mt 22:1-14)

8. 'Five Loaves and Two Fish'

(Mt 14:13-21; Mk 6:30-44; Lk 9:10-17) and

'Seven Loaves and Two Fish'

(Mt 15:32-39)

Jesus' miracles of 'Five Loaves and Two Fish' and 'Seven Loaves and Two Fish' provide us with very special teachings. They contain teachings about the Word of God, missiology, the doctrine of discipleship, and the doctrine of the church. In the first miracle, Jesus feeds 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish. There are 12 baskets of food left over. In the second miracle, Jesus feeds 4,000 people with seven loaves of bread and two fish. And there are 7 baskets of food left over.

All of the elements in both miracles contain symbolism concerning the Mystery of Christ. Bread, fish, basket, the order in which the bread and fish are distributed... all of these elements contain important meanings, and none of them can be ignored. They are deeply connected especially to the Abrahamic Covenant.

(1) Bread and Fish

Let's first look at what the bread and the fish symbolize. In the Bible, bread symbolizes the Word of God, or spiritual food. There are at least four passages in the Bible about this: Psalm 119:103, Jeremiah 15:16, Ezekiel 2:8-9, Ezekiel 3:3. In addition to being spiritual food, Word of God is also a spiritual weapon. That is why

it says in Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 4:12, and Revelation 19:15 that the Word of God is like a "double edged sword".

The Bible also refers to Jesus as "bread". In John 6:32-59, we find at least seven expressions describing Jesus as bread, or spiritual food. They are the following: "true bread", "the bread of God", "bread of life", "bread from heaven", "living bread", "Jesus' flesh", and "true food". The Christian tradition of breaking bread and drinking wine in the communion ceremony is very much associated to this. (Mt 26:26-29; Lk 22:14-20; 1 Cor 11:23-29).

In specific terms, the five loaves of bread in the first miracle (Mt 14:13-21) symbolize the five books of Moses (Torah, the Law). The two fish symbolize the Old and New Testaments. And since Jesus said that the whole of the Old Testament is about Himself (Lk 24:27,44; Jn 5:39), the five books of Moses also symbolize Jesus. After using these five loaves of bread to feed five-thousand, there were twelve baskets of food left over. This symbolizes that in the New Testament times, the Gospel of Jesus will spread far and wide, blessing many people.

The same thing happened in the miracle of 'Seven Loaves and Two Fish' (Mt 15:32-39). Jesus first gave the bread to His disciples. Then, the disciples distributed the bread to the crowd of 4,000, which was made up entirely of Jews, including some Diaspora Jews. After everyone had eaten the bread and fish, there were seven large baskets of bread and fish pieces left over.

In these miracles, the fish too symbolizes Jesus. The Greek word for fish is made up of five letters, "ΙΧΘΥΣ". All five letters symbolize Jesus. 'Ι' stands for Jesus (*Yesus* in Greek). 'Χ' stands for Christ (*Christos* in Greek). 'Θ' stands for God (*Theos* in Greek). 'Υ' stands

for Son (*Uios* in Greek). 'Σ' stands for Savior (*Soterios* in Greek). Thus, if we take the first letter of each word in the phrase "Jesus Christ God's Son Savior" (in Greek) to form an acronym, it becomes "ΙΧΘΥΣ", the Greek word for fish. (Table 7-12)

Fish can also symbolize Christians. In the Bible, when Jesus was calling His disciples, He commanded especially Peter and His brother Andrew to become "fishers of men" (Mt 4:18-19). And He even showed His disciples two "miraculous catch" miracles in which the men caught great numbers of fish by casting the net in the exact spot Jesus told them to (Lk 5:1-7; Jn 21:1-11).

The word 'Christian' means "follower of Christ" or "little Christ". The members of the Church of Antioch were the first to be called by this name (Acts 11:26). The fact that the fish was multiplied along with the bread in the miracles of Jesus feeding the thousands signified that in the New Testament period, there would be a great proliferation of Christians, people who resemble Christ.


Ichthys						
Fish	Greek	Ι	Χ	Θ	Υ	Σ
	pronunciation	I	ch	th	U	s
Jesus	Greek	Yesus	Christos	Theos	Uios	Soterios
	English	Jesus	Christ	God	the Son	Savior

Table 7-12. The meaning of the Jesus Fish symbol

(2) The Leftover Pieces

In the above two miracles of Jesus feeding the crowds, the baskets of leftover food also have spiritual significance. In the miracle of 'Five Loaves and Two Fish', twelve baskets of food were left over. In the miracle of 'Seven Loaves and Two Fish', seven large baskets were left over. (Note that in the latter, the baskets were large ones.) The 12 baskets in the first miracle symbolize the 12 disciples (Mt 10:2-3). The 7 baskets in the second miracle symbolize the Seven Churches of Asia Minor (Rev 2:1-3:22).

These 'Seven Churches' are archetypes of the seven different types of churches that exist in the world. (This is a large concept which can be applied to any part of the world and any period in time.

We also need to pay attention to the order in which the bread and fish were distributed. First, Jesus blessed the bread and fish and distributed them to His disciples. Since the bread and fish represent Jesus, this means that the disciples were the first to receive the Gospel. After the disciples received the bread, they in turn distributed it to the crowds. (The crowds were entirely Jewish, a portion of them being Diaspora Jews.) So this symbolized that the Gospel would go from the disciples to Jews and Diaspora Jews (Rom 1:16).

After the crowds had eaten, there were respectively 12 and 7 basketfuls bread and fish pieces left.

The 12 baskets of leftovers were entrusted to each of the disciples, and the 7 baskets were bequeathed to the seven churches. Most likely, Peter, Andrew, James, and the rest of the disciples each symbolically received a basket of leftover pieces.

Let's recall the story of the Canaanite woman we previously looked at. She said something about breadcrumbs. "Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table" (Mk 15:21). So, we can see even from the confession of the Canaanite woman that the pieces of bread or breadcrumbs were meant for the Gentiles. Thus, the leftover pieces in the two miracles of Jesus feeding the crowds represent spiritual food for the Gentiles. The leftover baskets of food were not meant for the Jews.

Thus, the 'whole bread' signifies the Gospel. And so do the pieces of bread or breadcrumbs. There is no "big Gospel" and "small Gospel". There is only one Gospel. The Gospel is one and the same.

Order	Five Loaves and Two Fish	Seven Loaves and Two Fish	Meaning
1	Disciples	Disciples	Jews
2	Crowd of 5,000	Crowd of 4,000	Jews, Diaspora Jews
3	12 baskets	7 baskets	12 disciples / 7 churches of Asia (Rev 2-3), all the churches in the world
	Leftover pieces	Leftover pieces	Gospel that must be spread to Gentiles (Mt 15:27; 28:19-20; Ac 1:8)

Table 7-13. The order in which 'five loaves and two fish' and 'seven loaves and two fish' were distributed

So as hinted by the baskets of leftover pieces entrusted to them, the disciples now had to take the Gospel to people of other cultures. And so did the seven churches of Asia. Spreading the

Gospel to the Gentiles is not something optional. It is a duty of all Christians.

The handful of Jews who received the Gospel from Jesus were given the mission of taking the Gospel not to their fellow Jews, but to the Gentile peoples of the Roman Empire. This was the will of God (Mt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). It was precisely in order to teach His disciples this will of God that Jesus performed the miracles of the 'bread and fish' and had the disciples collect 12 baskets and 7 baskets of leftover pieces.

9. The Samaritan Woman (John 4:1-42)

There is a story that really stands when we're talking about the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:2-3) and God's plan of salvation for the Gentiles. It is the story of the Samaritan woman at the well, which is found only in the Gospel of John (Jn 4:1-42).

During His public ministry, Jesus traveled from Galilee to Jerusalem numerous times. But He always avoided going through Samaria, and traveled instead along the Jordan River. The reason was that the Jews at the time had a strong antipathy toward Samaria. Even Jesus' disciples did not want their teacher to travel through Samaria. (Refer to Map 7-3, Jesus' main routes during His public ministry)

Map 7-3. Jesus' main routes during his public ministry

- Jesus usually used this way
- - -→ The way through Samaria



But one day, on His way up north to Galilee from Jerusalem, Jesus *had to* travel through Samaria. Notice that the Bible says that He “had to” travel through Samaria (Jn 4:4). That is, Jesus had planned in advance to meet this Samaritan woman. But why was this meeting so important? It was because Jesus had to teach His disciples that the Gospel would eventually go via Samaria to all the Gentile nations in the world (Acts 1:8). Go starting from Samaria to all the Gentile lands

Now, the Samaritans were of mixed ethnicity. Due to the Assyrian invasion of 722 BC, the inhabitants of Samaria were of mixed Jewish and Gentile heritage. During the invasion, the Assyrians either killed the Israelites or took them prisoner back to their own country. They also moved some of their own people into Samaria and had them settle there. So through this process, not only did the people of the land become mixed in blood, they became mixed in terms of culture and religion as well. As a result, the inhabitants of Samaria worshiped both God and foreign idols.

The Samaritans were shunned by the fully Jewish people of the region of Judah. Those among Samaritans who believed in God wanted to keep the Jewish traditions and worship at the Jerusalem Temple. But the Jews of Judah did not allow them to (2 Kings 17:21-33). For this reason, the Samaritans built their own temple on Mt. Gerizim in Samaria and worshipped God on their own there. This was the background to the story of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman.

When the Samaritan woman met Jesus, one of the questions she threw Him was precisely on this issue of worship (Jn 4:20). She asked Jesus whether it was right to worship God on Mt. Gerizim in

Samaria or in the Temple in Jerusalem. The answer Jesus gave her is famous: "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks" (Jn 4:23). Jesus says that now the time has arrived when the actual place of worship is not important; the only thing that matters is that we worship God "in Spirit and in Truth".

The "Spirit and Truth" here mean the Holy Spirit and Jesus ("Truth", Jn 14:6). So, Jesus means that the time has come when we must worship God in Jesus (the Truth) and full of the Holy Spirit. This is the way of worship in the New Testament age of the church. As this conversation proceeds, the Samaritan woman little by little begins to realize the identity of the one who is speaking to her. The decisive moment comes in John 4:25-26: "The woman said, 'I know that Messiah' (called Christ) 'is coming. When He comes, He will explain everything to us.'" Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he." Upon hearing this, the woman clearly understood that Jesus was the Christ.

Now, the surprising thing here is that the Samaritan woman had been *waiting* for the Christ. The reason this woman was able to recognize Jesus as the Christ so quickly is that she was much more innocent and childlike (in her approach to God) than all those Jews who had failed to see Jesus as the Christ. God had in fact prepared her heart in this way for her meeting with Jesus.

Jesus says in Matthew 5:8 that those who are pure in heart will see God. Hence, this Gentile woman received the great blessing of seeing God. And what did the Samaritan woman do right after she realized Jesus is the Messiah? She ran to her village to tell her

neighbors about Jesus (Jn 4:28-29). And due to her testimony, many people in her village believed in Jesus (Jn 4:39). They came to Jesus and asked Him to stay longer. Hence, Jesus and His disciples stayed in Samaria for two more days. And many more Samaritans repented and believed in Jesus (Jn 4:40-42).

The Samaritans who met Jesus quickly recognized that Jesus is the Savior of the World (Jn 4:42). Seeing this, Jesus said a famous line comparing people of His hometown of Galilee to these Samaritans: "a prophet has no honor in his own country" (Jn 4:44). This was a hint that in the future, the Gentiles would receive Jesus before the Jews.

The disciples, for their part, did not get to participate in the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Near the end of Jesus' conversation with the woman, they left looking for food to eat. When they returned, they asked Jesus to eat (Jn 4:31). But Jesus responded to them saying, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work. Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest" (Jn 4:34-35).

These two verses spoken by Jesus do not seem to fit the situation at all. However, in them is contained an important message about the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12:2-3, a message about missions. So what did Jesus mean by His words? He meant that the food He really wanted to eat was not the physical food that the disciples had come back with. It was rather to save mankind according to the will of God the Father. It was the evangelization of the Gentiles. That was what Jesus wanted more than anything else.

Also peculiar is the part where Jesus mentions the "four months until harvest". The "four months" Jesus is speaking of here is the four-month period from the Pentecost (March 6th, Lev 23:15-22) to the Feast of Trumpets (July 1st, Lev 23:24-25). We can interpret this symbolically as follows: the Church of Jerusalem was born on Pentecost Day (Acts 2:1-47). And the Feast of Trumpets symbolizes Jesus' Second Coming, when He will return in the sky with the sound of trumpets (Mt 24:31; 1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16). So, the four month period in between symbolizes the 2,000 year Age of the Christian Church when the harvest of Gentiles is to take place. When the four months are up, i.e. when the 2,000 years are up, when the harvest of Gentiles is almost over, Jesus will return in the sky with the sound of trumpets.

At the time, Jesus' disciples could not understand the meaning of Jesus' words in John 4:34-35, due to their strong Jewish ethnocentrism. But in time, the disciples would have to jump into the work of harvesting Gentiles for God, in order to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant. When the disciples saw masses of Samaritans, starting with the Samaritan woman, repent and accept Jesus, most likely their perspective of Gentiles (as well as Samaritans) began to change a little.

Jesus' disciples, in accordance with the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:2-3), received the commission to harvest the Gentiles all across the Roman Empire. But in order to carry out this mission, they needed to undergo a paradigm shift. They had to shift from an ethnocentric mentality to one focused on people of other cultures. Jesus did His utmost to help His disciples change their way of thinking.

The teachings, miracles, and events we've looked at in this chapter were all part of that training: Jesus's genealogy (Mt 1:1-17), the story of the 'Three Magi' (Mt 2:1-12), Jesus' teachings concerning 'Galilee of the Gentiles' (Mt 4:12-17; 11:20-26), 'the faith of the Gentile centurion' (Mt 8:5-13), 'the faith of the Canaanite woman' (Mt 15:21-28), the 'parable of the workers in the vineyard' (Mt 20:1-16), the 'parable of the two sons' (Mt 21:28-32), the 'parable of the wicked tenants' (Mt 21:33-46), the 'parable of the wedding banquet' (Mt 22:1-14), the miracle of 'five loaves and two fish' (Mt 14:13-21), the miracle of 'seven loaves and two fish' (Mt 15:32-39), and the conversion of the 'Samaritan woman at the well' (John 4:1-42). Using such teaching tools, Jesus trained His disciples for three years to prepare them for the mission of evangelizing the Gentiles.

In accordance with the Abrahamic Covenant, the disciples became missionaries to the Gentiles (goim). They became "kernels of wheat that died" to save the Gentiles (Jn 12:24). Without exception, every single one of them were either martyred while performing the work of evangelizing the Gentiles, martyred for the sake of the Gentiles, or killed by the Gentiles. Stephan (32 AD, Jerusalem, by stoning, Acts 7:60), James son of Zebedee (44 AD, Jerusalem, by decapitation, Acts 12:2); James the Younger (54 AD, Jerusalem, by stoning), Phillip (60 AD, Hierapolis, Turkey, by hanging), Simon the Zealot (61 AD, Persia, by crucifixion and being sawn in half), Barnabas (61 AD, Salamis, Cyprus, by stoning), James the brother of Jesus (62 AD, Jerusalem, by stoning), Matthias (64 AD, Ethiopia, by burning), Peter (65 AD, Rome, crucifixion), Thaddeus (66 AD, Armenia, beaten with clubs), Bartholomew (68 AD,

Armenia, crucifixion), Mark (68 AD, Alexandria, Egypt, dragging), Paul (68 AD, Rome, decapitation), Andrew (69 AD, Achaia, crucifixion), Matthew (70 AD, Nubia, Ethiopia, burning), Thomas (82 AD, Mylapore, India, spear and sword), Timothy (90 AD, Ephesus, decapitation), Luke (91 AD, Rome, hanging), John (96 AD, Ephesus, cauldron of boiling oil). Every one of them received the blessing of martyrdom while living out the Abrahamic Covenant.

Gentile missions is not an option for Christians - it is their duty. I the author hope that everyone, including myself and the readers of this book, will be called and empowered by God the Father and Jesus to be faithful harvesters of the Gentiles in these last days. Like Jesus' disciples, we must all participate directly or indirectly in the work of carrying out the Abrahamic Covenant.

I earnestly hope that we will all become blessed participants in this work of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, even if it means that we join the ranks of the martyrs in the process.

IV. Conclusion

Thus, we have studied the Four Gospels focusing on topics relating to the Great Commission. I hope this was a good opportunity to find out how the will of God, as in God's purpose of Creation, the Great Commandment, and the Great Commission, is related to the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12:2-3. Though the subject matter of the Four Gospels is very wide, the author has condensed just the core messages of the Four Gospels into this one book. I hope that this book will serve as a starting point or background and that the readers will be inspired by the Holy Spirit to study a greater breadth of subjects in the Four Gospels and the rest of the Bible. (Then, this book will have displayed true dynamicity.)

In the Bible, there are two very important passages that link together the Old and New Testaments. (For this reason, these passages are called the "backbone of the Bible".) One of them is the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12:2-3, which we covered in this book. It goes, "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." One of the author's important goals in writing this book was to clearly demonstrate the link between this passage and the Four Gospels. (Note: The author has also given a series of 34 lectures titled "The Four Gospels" on this very topic. The reader is urged to listen to those lectures to better understand this book.)

The other passage that serves as the "backbone of the Bible" is Genesis 3:15. This passage concerns Soteriology, the doctrine of Jesus' Salvation. It is as follows: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel." This verse was the starting point of the 7,000 year (ongoing) history of God's great plan to save the human race. (The first 4,000 years were in the Old Testament times, and the last 3,000 years are in the New Testament times.) 'God's great plan of salvation' is a very important subject that the author has given many lectures on. In particular, the subject of the 'Seed of the Woman' in Genesis 3:15 is dealt with in depth in another book by the author, titled "The Origin of Religions <Seed of the Woman Series 1>" (2015, AMI Publishing). I highly recommend reading that book and meditating deeply on its contents. The Four Gospels and Genesis 3:15 are very closely connected in terms of God's plan of salvation.

All that is written in the Bible is about Jesus (Lk 24:27, 44; Jn 5:39), and the entire Bible was written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 3:16). Therefore, one must not fall into a habit of picking out just the parts of the Bible that he/she is comfortable with and disregarding the rest; then, one won't be able to discern the wider, deeper, higher meanings (Eph 3:19) in the Bible.

I hope that through this book, the readers will have developed a larger perspective with which to view the Old Testament and New Testament as a single great flow and to connect the Four Gospels with the rest of the books in the Bible. At the same time, I hope this book will have provided the opportunity to view each of the events in the Gospels in a detailed, even microscopic way. To this

end, I earnestly hope that God will grant the readers wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and insight (Ex 31:3; Prov 3:13; Isa 11:1-2). I hope all of us will obey the will of God contained in His Purpose of Creation, Great Commandment, and Great Commission, and that we may have the same vision that Paul confessed right before his martyrdom: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing" (2 Tim 4:7-8). Amen.

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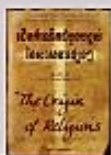
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